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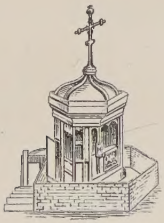

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PREFACE

BY THE BISHOP OF OXFORD

WITHIN the strict limits of a Preface little can be said:—too little to tell half the thoughts that come with the recollection of Dr. Liddon's *Sermons at St. Paul's and Elsewhere*. In his *Life and Letters*, Mr. Johnston has well recorded many of the traits which made those Sermons great and memorable; while much of their distinctive character can hardly be conveyed to those who never knew the preacher, nor came within the range of his direct and personal appeal. In these few pages I will only try to tell what seems to me to have been a very deep and fruitful element in the power of his preaching. He himself told it unconsciously, I think, in some words which he spoke to me about thirty years ago. He had appointed me to preach on a Sunday evening in St. Paul's, and across the door of the cab as I was coming away after the service, he made his only comment on the sermon. "Good night," he said, in the quiet, penetrating voice which his friends can never

forget,—"Good-night: I dare say you will come in time to know what people really need."

"What people really need;"—it was his estimate of that that animated and controlled him as, with unswerving devotion, he used his extraordinary gifts of thought, and learning, and imagination, and argument, and utterance. His mind and heart were always pastoral. He was thinking constantly of the difficulties, and temptations, and dangers, and capacities of those to whom he preached; and, reverently as he always thought of them, he did not forget their limitations. With rare tenacity he grasped the truth he had to teach: few men seemed so little liable to doubt; but as he grasped the truth his eye was always scanning those whose thoughts and lives he longed to lift by it. And thus he was saved from many of the preacher's besetting risks. Bishop Dupanloup, in speaking of those who preach without any definite aim or expectation, compares them to a man whom he had watched fishing in the most unpromising part of the river, and who met the advice that he should try elsewhere with the answer that he was only fishing to amuse himself. Furthest removed from any such waste of time and opportunity were the sermons that went home to the hearts of those who thronged St. Paul's when Dr. Liddon preached. To him it would have appeared like "a poor and heartless trifling with the most solemn interests of

dying men." The words which he suggested for the legend on the great bell in the Cathedral tower —"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" —seemed to sound in all those purposeful and pleading and energetic sentences that rang through the Cathedral.

Eager and intense as was his own interest in what he was saying, he never mistook it for the response of his hearers, nor imagined that what interested him must thereof of necessity instruct them. Whatever he might say about modern Oxford, he was deeply and unalterably an Oxford man, in culture, in affection, in habit of mind; yet the most loyal Londoner under the dome of St. Paul's never doubted that he and the preacher understood one another. Since tastes differ, "academic" may be a term either of praise or of blame; but in neither direction would any one have used it to describe Dr. Liddon's preaching. And the constant desire to know "what people really need," the constant effort so to minister the truth as to meet their need, kept him unexcited by his own eloquence and unharmed by others' admiration. I doubt whether any great and popular preacher of recent times has talked or thought less about himself.—It would be a subtle and interesting inquiry to ask how far his habitual recollection of the ways and wants and limitations of other men's minds told on the movement, the

working, the enterprise of his own mind; it may perhaps have tended to keep him back from those lonely ventures by which some great teachers, such as Dr. Mozley and Dr. Moberly, have enriched our heritage of thought. But in the high task to which he was called it was an element of distinctive power; it held his splendid gifts in dutiful and steady concentration on a clear, unselfish purpose. His vast learning, his strong logic, his sense of lucid order, his sustained grasp of a conception, his brilliant faculty of expression, all went straight and worked hard to advance his single intention of giving "what people really need;" and the needy hearts of thousands felt what God was granting them through that devoted and unwearied ministry of His Word.

I trust that many may find in this volume the blessing of that Word, the help that the preacher longed and toiled to bear into men's lives, and, perhaps, some lingering echo of that matchless voice which to those who listened seemed like an intrinsic part of his witness to the beauty, the glory, the supremacy of the truth that came by Jesus Christ.

CUDDESDON,
September, 1907.

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NOTE

The Sermons in this Volume have been selected by the Rev. H. N. BATE, M.A.

SERMON I

THE CREATION

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
—GEN. i. 1.

EVERY child among us knows these simple words; and yet how pregnant are they with interests—the interest of difficulty, but also the interest of instruction, to the strongest and keenest minds! I do not propose to invite your attention to the whole of the first chapter of Genesis: there is much more than enough to occupy us this evening in the opening verse. The latter portion of the chapter tells us how God, during a series of periods, of the real duration of which we can form no estimate whatever, and which, after the Eastern manner, are called "days," formed the various creatures, animate and inanimate, which we see around us, out of pre-existing matter. But the first verse of Genesis carries us back further and higher up than this. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This is not merely a heading or summary of what is presently to follow. Nor does

it merely tell us that God is the Author, both of our planet, and also of that vast system of worlds in which our planet is little more than a large aerolite. It does not merely assert that God created the immaterial as well as the material heavens and earth: that He created those vast multitudes of intelligences who have no bodily form, but who are wiser far and mightier than man. It implicitly affirms that the process whereby all these orders of existence and of life were summoned into being was itself unique—an act strictly proper to God—an act impossible to a creature. "In the beginning God *created* the heaven and the earth."

What is creation in this primary Biblical sense of the term? It is not production of any kind. The Everlasting Son of God is begotten of His Father by a kind of unbegun, unending production, internal to the Being of God: He is "begotten," yet "not made." Creation is not, in its strictest sense, the giving form and order to pre-existent matter. Of that within limits man is capable. In that sense God has continued to create ever since the creation. It is possible, as was distantly suggested by P. Lombard[1] in the heart of the Middle Ages, and as a distinguished naturalist[2] of our own time has maintained, that He has continuously

[1] *Sentent.* lib. iii. distinct. xv.
[2] Darwin, *Origin of Species.*

developed even new species of creatures by a natural selection out of lower species previously existing. In this, and other kindred ways, it may be that He "worketh hitherto." [1]

That which is proper to God is the summoning into being of matter, substance, life, which before was not, by an act of His Almighty Will. It is true that the Hebrew word translated "created" in our Bibles, although always used to describe the action of Almighty God, is used in some passages to describe creation in the lower sense, viz., God forming new beings out of already existing matter.[2] But, as has been observed by Gesenius [3]—a Hebrew scholar, to say the least, with no prejudices in favour of Christianity—the word must mean more than this in the first verse of Genesis. It must mean that the Universe originally owes both its form and its substance to the creative fiat of God. And this is the natural sense of the passage in a translation, as in the original. The Christian Bible, like the Christian creed, begins with stating that all that is not God owes its being to God: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

[1] St. John v. 17.

[2] Gen. i. 21, 27; Ps. li. 10.

[3] Gesenii *Thesaurus Linguæ Hebrææ et Chaldææ*, s. v. בָּרָא, note.

I

1. It is remarkable that the Bible does not begin by saying, "God exists"—or, "There is one God." It begins by exhibiting God in action: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Why is this? Because the correctness of our belief about God, or indeed our having any serious belief about Him at all, depends altogether upon the idea which we form of His relationship to all beside Himself.

When we look forth from ourselves at the vast system of being in which we are placed, and of which we consciously form a part, we cannot, as thinking men, content ourselves with simply registering the surface impressions which we gain; we cannot but ask for an explanation of what we see. The problem of existence is indeed already settled for the Christian who believes his Creed and his Bible: although the Christian who realises his Creed is ever alive to the beauty and to the mystery of what he sees around him. But conceive that a thoughtful man, in the full maturity of his powers, had suddenly been placed in the midst of this beautiful system of natural life. His eye rests upon the forms and colours around him with keen, fresh delight. Earth, sky, sun, stars, clouds, mountains, valleys, rivers, seas, trees, animals, flowers,

and fruits, in groups and separately, pass before him. His thought is still eagerly curious; it has not yet been vulgarised and impoverished down to the point at which existence is taken as a matter of course: the beauty, the mysteriousness, the awfulness of the Universe, still elevates and thrills him; and his first desire is to account to himself for the spectacle on which he gazes. Whence comes it, this beautiful scene? What upholds it? Why is it here? Does it exist of itself? Is it its own upholder and ruler, or is there any Cause or Being in existence who gives it substance and shape? From this question there is no escape; we cannot behold the vast flood of life sweep before our eyes without asking whence it takes its rise: we cannot read the pages of that marvellous book of Nature and be indifferent to the question whether they have an Author. And thus it is that in circles where Christ is not named, or is named only in accents of contemptuous scorn, the question is asked in our day more and more importunately: Whence comes this Universe? what upholds it in being? for what end does it exist?

Now the Christian solution of this question is the only one which seriously respects the rights, nay, the existence of God.

Contrast it with the doctrine which would account for the Universe altogether without God; contrast

it with pure Materialism. Materialism tells us that the Universe is eternal and self-existent. The Universe exists, because it exists. God of course it leaves out of the question altogether; it holds Him to have no real existence: He is pronounced to be a creature of the human imagination, the product of the human mind at a particular stage of its development. In its most elaborated modern form, this Materialism proposes to substitute two self-existent factors for the God of Heaven, two blind, all-powerful agencies—matter and force. It pronounces the Universe to be the result of innumerable combinations of self-existent force with self-existent matter; and it maintains that while the quantity of this eternally existing force is invariable, force can transform itself into light, into heat, into electricity, into magnetism; it is, by turns, weight, affinity, cohesion, mechanism. It is inherent in matter; it is light and heat in the suns and in the fixed stars; it is mechanical impulse in planets which move around a central globe; it is cohesion or magnetism in the ponderable material of the heavenly bodies. Its action is regulated by uncreated, self-existent laws. "The laws of Nature," cries one writer of this school, "are barbarous inflexible forces; they know neither justice nor benevolence." And beyond Nature, we are told, there is nothing—nothing save in the diseased imagination of man. Again I quote the

words of a German author who is exulting in the supposed triumph of this materialistic philosophy: "No hand holds the earth in its course; no prayer can arrest the sun or lull the fury of the storm; no voice can raise the dead from their eternal sleep; no angel can deliver the captive; no hand stretched forth from the clouds can feed the hungry; no sign from heaven can tell us that we know anything beyond Nature. Beyond Nature there is nothing; and Nature," cries Feuerbach with all the ferocious exultation of despair, "Nature has no answer that she can make to the griefs or the prayers of man; she drives him back inexorably upon himself."

This is the sentence of Materialism and Atheism; and I do not here ask whether we can listen to a system which gives the lie both to the heart and to the conscience, to some of the deepest and profoundest aspirations of which man is conscious. But I bid you to look out for one moment upon the Universe, and ask yourselves if the materialistic account of its existence is even rational. That quick-witted and thoughtful people of antiquity, the Greeks, gave it a name which has lasted on into modern times: they called it the Cosmos. They meant by that word that upon the face of the Universe there is stamped beyond everything else the imprint of an harmonious beauty. It meets the eye, it falls upon the ear of man, this harmony

of nature; it is no fancy impression which we gain from that splendid spectacle of universal order. But why should this harmony exist? Why do we behold this regularity, this concerted and orderly movement of universal existence? If blind force and blind matter are the only ultimate factors of existence, why should chaos ever have terminated in a reign of such harmonious and perfect order? Materialism replies that force moulds matter in obedience to laws. But law implies a legislator, and the question is, Who has created the laws?—why do these laws exist, and no other? Has any presided then over that perpetual intercommunion of force with matter, and guided it by law to a result of such singular beauty? Atheism smiles at us Christians when we ask this question, and replies, "A Chance." Out of millions upon millions of chances that it might have been otherwise, one chance has carried the day: it has issued in the reign of order; it has eventuated in the world. Under the guidance of this Chance force and matter have determined into the Universe as we see it; and you yourselves, my brethren, with that marvellous apparatus of bodily organs which belongs to each one of you, and with that yet more wonderful apparatus of moral and mental faculties, you yourselves are said to be only its ripest product. This is the last word of materialistic discovery; the human mind with its quick and fine

sensibilities, with its vast range of capacities, with its power of contemplating all nature lying around it, as a critic and in many ways a master,—the human mind itself is only a product of the eternal intercourse of blind force with blind matter under the guidance of Chance!

2. From this position a violent recoil is natural; and when this recoil takes place without the guidance of Revelation the result is Pantheism. While the Atheistic Materialist says, "There is no God," the Pantheist answers "Everything is God." The Universe is not made by God; it is God in solution; God passing into various manifestations of being. God is the soul of the Universe; He is the common principle which constitutes its unity: He is at the root of, He combines, He manifests Himself in all its infinite variety of being and life. He is the common fund of life, which animates all that lives; He is the existence which is shared in by all that exists. Pantheism lays emphasis on, it exaggerates, two great truths—the Omnipresence of God, and the interdependence of created life. But Pantheism denies that God is independent of the world; it asserts that He has no existence apart from the Universe which manifests Him as being Himself. It asserts that He is not a Person, having as such consciousness, memory, and will: He is only an impersonal quality or force; or that He is an Idea, slowly realising itself in being. Of

the general doctrine there are many shades and modifications, but they practically agree in making the Universe identical with God.

Pantheism often uses a religious kind of language which puts people off their guard and blinds them to its real nature and drift. But if Pantheism speaks of God it practically denies Him. Pantheism says that God is the Infinite; but then it goes on to say that this Infinite only exists in that which is finite. But if the Infinite be thus literally identified with the finite, it ceases to be, or rather never was, the Infinite, and there is in reality no Infinite in existence; in other words, there is no God. This is a speculative objection, sufficiently formidable but less serious than a moral objection which I proceed to notice. The very first element of our belief in God is that God is a Moral Being, that He is Essential Right, Essential Justice, Essential Sanctity, Essential Purity, Essential Truth, Essential Love. But if you say with the Pantheist that God is Universal Life, and that Universal Life is God, you thereby destroy God's Morality. You make God the agent and producer of evil, as well as the agent or producer of good; or else you deny that the distinction between absolute good and absolute evil really exists. You make God, indeed, the energy which produces deeds of charity, of courage, of justice, of integrity; but you also identify Him with the energy which

issues in adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, in all that is untrue, cruel, impure. And therefore, of two things one, if Pantheism be true. Either God is the Author of evil—a blasphemy which is destructive of His Essential Being; or else the distinction between good and evil is a chimera, a figment, and then the verdict of the moral sense is a weakly superstition, and you sap the basis of all possible religion by sapping the basis of morality.

3. Besides the doctrines of Materialistic Atheism and Pantheism there is one other supposition—the supposition that the Universe and God are both eternal; that an Eternal Universe has existed side by side with an Eternal God. This is the refuge of minds which shrink from the revealed truth of a creation, yet hesitate to acquiesce in the dark theories of a Universe without God, or a Universe which is God. But this third theory inevitably resolves itself into one of the two first. Unless it is to say that there are two Gods, two self-existent co-eternal beings, it must say either that the Universe is the reality, and God the imaginary counterpart, or it must say that the Universe itself is God. And if, somewhat violently, this consequence be declined, and the co-existence of God and an Eternal Universe be resolutely maintained, whence then, we ask, come the laws, the harmony, the form of this self-subsisting, uncreated Universe?

We have only the difficulties of Atheism or of Pantheism, as the case may be, without their completeness. But if it is impossible to acquiesce in the idea of a Universe without God, or of a Universe which is itself God, or of a Universe which is co-eternal with God, and so a second God, it remains that we accept the Bible statement of a Universe created by God. This statement alone is really consistent with serious belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. The last-mentioned theory denies His solitary supremacy; Pantheism buries Him in moral darkness: Atheistic Materialism denies Him outright. One relation of God towards the Universe, and one only, is compatible with a serious Theism: it is expressed by Moses: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

II

But the doctrine of Creation does not merely protect the Supremacy, the Personality, the Sanctity, the Reality of God: it sheds yet more special light upon His Nature and Character.

(*a*) And here, observe how it illustrates the boundless resources of God's Self-existent Life. For the point before us you will remember is that in His original creative act, God did not merely fashion existing materials into new forms: He

called into being the very material which He would subsequently fashion; He called it into being out of nothingness. No matter whatever, nor any created spirit, had any antecedent existence, save in the infinite possibilities latent in God's Almighty Will. By the fiat of that Will it began to be. The shapeless, graceless mass of rudimentary matter, "without form, and void,"[1] to which order and form would be imparted during a long series of subsequent ages, was summoned into existence. This stupendous act of power is distinctly proper to God: it is so entirely above our human capacity that the imagination strains itself in vain to depict the process; we can only attempt to measure it by contrast,—by contrast with our own impotence. Man, it is true, can create, in a lower sense: he can give to materials made ready to his hand a form and capacity which, but for his industry and his genius, would not have belonged to them. Speaking in the midst of this vast metropolis, of this magnificent temple, how can I deny that man is in a sense a creator? The creations of his industrial enterprise, the creations of his literary and artistic genius, the creations of his political and administrative ability, the creations of his religious instincts, lie plentifully around us. But these creations presuppose in each and every case a material which man did not create. You are painters, musicians,

[1] Gen. i. 2.

poets, architects, politicians. But you only employ, and combine, and organise: you do not create. You invoke the laws of production, you cannot enact them. You combine colours, you harmonise sounds, you arrange words in obedience to thoughts, you range stones on stones high into the air till you have visibly expressed ideas which move the souls of men, you devise schemes of government, or you strive to augment the wealth of nations. But you can do no more. You seem perhaps to go a step further back, but you are as far from real creation as ever. You substitute brick which you have made for stone which you could not make, but you cannot make the clay out of which you make the brick. You combine sounds and colours, and you seem to have added to the existing stock of beauty which charms the ear and the eye: but can you create the primary sounds or colours which you so successfully combine? You have a new idea or combination of ideas, and you coin a new word, as you say, to express it: but if your new word is to be understood, it dares not be absolutely new, or it would be unintelligible: it is merely the modification of some current expression, foreign or domestic, to an unaccustomed sense. You can as economists augment capital by making the most of its twin sources; but can you create those sources? It is true that the printing-press and the steam-engine are your creations; but the force of compressed

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vapour is as old as the Universe; and in one form or another the material of every printing-press in Europe has existed since the moment of the Creation. You have only observed, discovered, applied properties and materials which you could never have created: and at this moment you perceive the real limits of your creative power, when you reflect that by no amount of strength or skill could you bring a single atom into existence, or crush a single atom into nonentity: you can only shift and combine existing atoms: you can only decompose, or accumulate the material around you. You can inflict upon that material the glorious imprint of your taste or of your intelligence; but if you would rival the primal creative act of God, whereby He gave being to non-existent matter, you find yourselves as powerless as the zoophyte which is so low in the scale of being that you cannot clearly distinguish it from a vegetable; you are not less removed than it from participation in the inalienable creative prerogative of the Most High.

(β) Observe, too, as an element of creation, the presence of that mysterious gift, so intimately present to each one of us, in its essence so entirely beyond our power of analysis, which we call Life. We know life by its symptoms: by growth and movement, by feeling and gesture; and in its higher forms, by speech and expression. What is life? It is growth in the vegetable; it is feeling

and movement in the animal; it is thought, reflection, resolve in man, as these manifest themselves in speech and look and action. But what is it in itself, in its essence, this gift of life? Science, the unraveller of so many secrets, is silent here: as silent as when she had not yet begun to inquire and to teach. She can define the conditions, the accompaniments, the surroundings, the phenomena of life: but its essence she knows not. It is a mystery which eludes her in her laboratories and her museums: each of her most accomplished votaries carries it perpetually with him, and understands it as little as does the peasant or the child. Oh marvellous gift of life! true ray of the Creator's Beauty, in thy lowest as in thy highest forms! We men can foster it; we can stint it; we can, by a profound natural mystery, as parents, yet in obedience to inviolable laws, transmit it as a sacred deposit to beings which have it not; we can crush it out by violence into death. But we cannot create it. Much indeed we men have done to detect the secret forces of the natural world, and to lead them captive in the procession of our advancing civilisation. We have made steam the instrument of a motive power, stronger and swifter than that of the strongest and swiftest animals; we have bidden the electric fluid become the instantaneous messenger of our thought across continents and oceans; the sunlight is now an artist whom we

detain in our studios, and whose capacities we are even yet slowly discovering. But no force however strong, no fluid however subtle, no combination of chemical materials however well adjusted, enables us to command the primal sources of life—of that awful gift which issues only from the Hands of God. Again and again man has believed himself on the eve of securing that high prerogative: again and again his expectations have ended in failure and disappointment. We can build a Crystal Palace, and fill it with the choicest products of human industry and skill, but we cannot confer animal life upon the tiniest insect that pitches upon its windows: we cannot bestow vegetable life upon the most neglected weed that springs up unbidden in the adjacent gardens. Life, my brethren, in its lowest as in its highest forms, is a prerogative gift of the Creator; man can determine its measure, he can maim its beauty, he can crush it into death; but he cannot originate it, he cannot even discover what in its essence it is.

(γ) Once more, God creates in majestic and perfect freedom. No force was put upon Him: the Universe did not escape from Him against His Will or without it, like some volcanic eruption or graduated emanation of His Being. He made it, but He might have left it unmade. He made it, as He made it; He might have made it otherwise. It exists as we see it; and the question

cannot be repressed,—awful as it is,—why did He make it?

To that question, my brethren, I know no answer save that hinted at by the prophet, that God created out of the exuberance of His Love.[1] He willed to be surrounded by beings who should know and love Him, and upon whom He might shed the response of an Infinite Affection. True, He needed nothing in His blissful Eternity before creation. Self-sustained, Self-sufficing, rejoicing in the unbegun, unending, ineffable bliss of Their ceaseless inter-communion, the Three Divine Persons, within the One Indivisible Essence of Godhead, lived alone throughout an eternity. No created being could add to the bliss of God: none could lessen it: and yet the Divine Love willed to summon a whole creation into being, upon which, in its perfectness and beauty, and even in its misery and shame, that Love might lavish its caresses.

Do we not here see the great promise, which adjusts Christian thought to a belief in the mysteries of the Christian creed? True, the Incarnation is a stupendous mystery, but it is at least not a greater mystery than the Creation. It is at least not more difficult to say why God should have taken on Himself a created form, to live in it as an Example, and to lead it on to death as

[1] Jer. xxxi. 3.

an Atoning Sacrifice, than why He should have created at all. Each is an act of power: each is an act embodying the gift of life; this in a lower, that in a higher sense. The motive of each is Love. And has it ever seemed to you that in Redemption, Eternal Love seeking God's lost and degraded family, is shrouded at times in a dark robe of mystery, and covered with the ignominy of apparent failure? There is, you say, the Bible, unfolding God's Will; yet how many never read it, or read it only to reject, to cover it with ribald profanity! There is the Church, the House of God's family; but how many see in her only a polity of this world and turn a deaf ear to her heavenly claims! There is the Spirit; but how many grieve or quench His presence! There are the Sacraments; but multitudes only eat and drink judgment or refuse to eat and drink at all—not discerning beneath the earthly veils the Body of the Lord![1] There is the Cross of Jesus, the fountain-head of all blessing and pardon—rising as the Symbol and Instrument of a Universal Mercy: yet who shall tell the tale of souls for whom the Atoning Blood was poured forth in vain?

True, my brethren, it is so: but it is with Creation as with Redemption; the difficulty for the Christian is an equal difficulty for the serious

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 29.

Theist. God respects the free-will which He has given us, even when it is turned against Him: we could not have been so majestically like Him as we are unless He had given it us. He created us, knowing that His gift of free-will would be abused: He redeemed us, knowing that despite would be done to the Atoning Blood. A petty human philosophy may mutter: "It were better not to have created or redeemed at all." But an Apostle exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!"[1] His far-sightedness is not to be dwarfed down to the range of our spiritual telescopes: nor is the fulness of His Love to be stinted to a Universe because you or I should wilfully reject it. True, both in Creation and Redemption there is a shadow which is a foil to the Eternal Love: Love burns bright, but is ever and anon robed in mystery. A passing cloud may hide the star-light from our eyes during the brief night of time: but all shadows will have rolled away for ever when the Eternal Day[2] has once broken upon the redeemed intelligence.

III

Some of you, my brethren, will perhaps be thinking to yourselves: "We expected to hear a practical sermon; and we get, instead of it, a speculative

[1] Rom. xi. 33. [2] Song of Sol. ii. 17.

disquisition upon the origin of the Universe. What can it signify to the state of a man's conscience, to his performance of his daily round of duties, whether he believes or does not believe that matter is not eternal, and that the Universe was created by God out of nothing?" My brethren, I say that it matters a great deal. The belief that God made the Universe out of nothing is pre-eminently a practical belief. It cuts out by the roots the lingering and false notion which many a man fondles with such subtle tenacity, that in some sense he exists by his own right.

I speak not now to the poor, to the old, to the sick, to those who cannot but feel day by day how frail is the tenure by which they hold to life, and who cling earnestly and trustfully to an Unseen Arm. But you may meet many a man in the streets of this Metropolis whose speech and manner, whose action and bearing, might convince you that he practically looks upon himself as a self-existent being. He would not perhaps admit that he held that conviction in so many words: but if you could take his thought on the subject to pieces, and sort out its various ingredients, you would find that he habitually assumes himself to exist, partly through a vague Divine permission; more distinctly, as a consequence of the will of his earthly parents; most of all, in virtue of an intrinsic right to existence, which he does not analyse but takes for

granted. He feels life bounding in his veins; he is conscious of his strong sinews, and it may be of his keen and vigorous wit; and perhaps he is surrounded by all that makes this world attractive: he has education, position, fortune, friends: or at any rate, he has a hard head and a brawny arm; he has made a home for himself by his own exertions; his life hitherto has been a triumph of self-reliance, and living as he does in this great city, all that falls upon his ear, all that meets his eye, speaks of man, of man's energy and skill, of man's progressive victories over the forces around him, of man's lordly empire over all other visible forms of life. As the poet Cowper says, with a profoundly religious sentiment, if only with partial truth,

"God made the country, but man made the town."

At any rate, in the town, man has moulded the materials with which God supplies him: man's activity is prominently in the foreground; and as the dense fogs are in part the creations of your industry, and for hours or days in every year entirely hide God's sunshine from your view; so a thick intellectual vapour, often less transient, alas! than its material counterpart, issues from this constant unrelieved contemplation of human energy and skill, and hangs drearily between many a noble soul and the God Who made it. Ah! my brother, is it not so? Thou shrinkest from confessing to

thyself that there is One Being in existence to Whom thou owest, literally, all that thou hast, all that thou art. Thy self-reliance, thy sense of vigour, let me say it, thy pride, is unwilling to look beyond the cobwebs, the influences, atmospheric, social, political, the happy accidents, the second causes—cobwebs which thou hast spun around thy thought—that thou mayest screen, if possible, from thy view the overwhelming sight of the creative Majesty and the inalienable rights of God. Thou wouldest fain not own that thou art a created thing, and that thou art owned by a Creator. Yet let me ask, with the Apostle, If a Supreme Being exists at all, what hast thou that thou didst not receive?[1] There is no real choice between a rejection of Theism and a loyal acknowledgment of God the Creator and of the rights which flow from that relationship to His creatures. Open thine eyes, and behold how all outward blessings, all bodily endowments, all mental strength and beauty, as well as all spiritual grace, stream from One Hand, through whatever channels, across whatever regions of space or time—to thee—even to thee. Thou didst but accept these gifts, each and all; the very personality within thee, the "I" of which thou speakest in the centre of thy being, and which is thyself, is itself a gift. One thing only thou hast contributed, purely too from thine own stock of

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

resources; one thing which the Almighty Creator Himself could not have furnished to thee: thou hast sinned. Yet thou art what thou art, thou hast what thou hast, not that thou shouldst wrap thyself in a purblind selfishness, not that thou shouldst think meanly or despairingly of thy lot, but that thou shouldst take the place for which the Everlasting Love of the Creator designed thee in the perfected Universe of life. Thy being need not be an eternal failure, unless thou art resolved to have it so. For thee, a sinner, there are gifts superadded to the gift of creation;—the priceless Blood of Atonement Which washes out all sins, even the foulest; the Illuminating Spirit; the Sacraments of Life. Awake, thou that sleepest in some dream of Pantheistic or Materialistic error, in some deadening slumber of sensual passion or of worldly ambition, awake to realise the awfulness, but also the blessedness of existence! "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."[1] Whether thy path here be strewn with roses, or entangled with thorns, if thou believest in a Creator, revealed more clearly in Redemptive Love, thou knowest the secret, the majesty of thy destiny. Soon thou shalt place thy foot upon the threshold of Eternity, to gaze face to face upon Him from Whom all life proceeds, and to Whom, whether for acceptance or for judgment,

[1] Eph. v. 14.

all returns. Then thou wilt acknowledge that without the knowledge of thy Creator, thy earthly life had been indeed a misery; thou wilt bless Him for bringing thee by His Mercy to that Home which He prepared even for thee, when in the beginning He created the heaven and the earth.

SERMON II

THE SILENCE OF BABYLON

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"
—Ps. cxxxvii. 4.

Everybody must see that this Psalm belongs to a later age than that of David. It is one of several Psalms that were really written about the time of the Babylonish Captivity; but no one of these has its date so visibly stamped upon it as this. It must have been composed just after the return to the Holy City by a writer whose mind was still full of the horrors of the Exile. One incident among others stands out with vivid clearness in his memory. The captive Israelites had been wont to sit on the banks of the rivers which watered the country of their conquerors, gazing at the mighty stream which rolled on through that vast plain:—perhaps they saw in it an image of the ever-advancing stream of time, which was bringing the hour of their deliverance nearer and nearer. It was on the banks of two of these rivers, the Hiddekel or Tigris, and

the Chebar, that Daniel and Ezekiel beheld their great visions. And now less famous persons, such as this nameless Psalmist and his companions, some of whom had probably been members of the temple choir, or had learnt its melodies, had crept out of the narrow and thronged streets of the great city, and had betaken themselves to the resort of their countrymen on the river-bank. There they sat, during the long hours of the hot Eastern day, silently watching the eddies of the ever-advancing waters; and their thoughts naturally wandered off to that far distant home, and that dearly loved sanctuary which was now lying waste and desolate, and from which they had been torn by their ruthless conquerors. When they thought of Zion, so unlike the scene before them, of Zion with its surrounding hills and its gentle brooks, with its dear and cherished memories, and its sanctities hallowed by the reverence of ages, they could no longer command themselves—they wept. High upon the willows which grew along the river-banks they hung up their harps—instruments these which, as being traditionally devoted to the expression of joy, had no longer any use in the sad days that had come upon them. They hung up their harps high out of reach and out of sight, lest, seeing them, the oppressor should repeat his request that his captives would cast aside their sorrow, and would sing the old consecrated melodies which

they had neither mind nor heart to sing in Babylon.

> "For they that carried us away captive
> Required of us a song;
> And they that wasted us
> Asked for mirth,
> Saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." [1]

The temple music had a reputation even among he heathen peoples of Central Asia; and just as the sacred vessels of the temple were employed to decorate the sideboards of the Babylonian monarchs, so it seemed to the conqueror natural and in order that the sacred words and music which had for ages set forth the worship of the One True God should furnish a more refined amusement to the cultivated Pagans who had trodden down His Sanctuary and had enslaved His people. It seemed natural, I say, to the heathen themselves; but the heart of what was still best in captive Israel beat true to what was due to the honour of God, and to the memories of their ancient worship:

> "How shall we sing the Lord's song
> In a strange land?
> If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
> May my right hand forget its skill to strike the chords!
> If I remember thee not,
> May my tongue cease to sing, and cleave to my mouth;
> If I prefer not Jerusalem
> Above all that charms me most." [2]

[1] Ps. cxxxvii. 3. [2] *Ib.* 4–6.

Nay! this request of the heathen oppressor that the captives should sing the Lord's song for his æsthetic gratification, rouses the Psalmist to a sterner mood. His thought passes back to "the day of Jerusalem," that sad and never-to-be-forgotten day, when the city and temple were sacked and burned by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. He cannot forget how, in those dark hours, a race of kinsfolk by blood had cheered on the heathen foe in his work of destruction—how the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem, said, "Down with it! down with it! even to the ground."[1] He cannot forget that Babylon then showed itself in its true light as the implacable enemy of God's kingdom upon earth; and in no spirit of personal or national vengeance, but as the exponent of a Divine sentence, he predicts her ruin. Already he sees the approaching capture of the city by Darius Hystaspes; Babylon is before his eyes, wasted with misery, as he gazes on her; she is herself served as she had served her conquered provinces; her young children are dashed against the stones by the Persian invader.[2] But, meanwhile, if the Psalmist is asked to prostitute his gift by singing the old temple songs to amuse the heathen, there are many reasons which make compliance impossible. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

[1] Ps. cxxxvii. 7. [2] *Ib.* 8, 9.

I

"The Lord's song!" That is what the Psalmist could not sing for the gratification of his Babylonian masters. To Babylon it was only a question of singing the "songs of Zion." These "songs," it was thought, were what the children of Zion might rightly contribute to the amusement of the empire-city. Each conquered province had its speciality; and Judæa might just as well bring what it had to yield, as did others. Evidently "the songs of Zion" meant one thing to the Babylonian hearer, another to the captive Psalmist. To the Psalmist they were parts of a sacred worship. Their language was sacred; Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, and, more lately, Jeremiah, had contributed to it. The ideas were sacred: the true God, His gracious revelation of Himself to Israel, the honour due to Him, the danger of neglecting Him—these were the subjects of Israel's songs. The very music was sacred; it was as old, probably, as the time of Solomon; it had already been hallowed by the use of centuries; it was bound up with the tenderest emotions and associations of many generations. "The Lord's song" meant for Israel all that was precious to the soul: but for the Babylonians it meant merely entertainment,—a newly imported curiosity, a new sensation in the world of art.

There was nothing common to Israel and Babylon in their way of looking at it.

"The Lord's song!" Any ancient hymn of king or prophet which had passed into the service of the sanctuary bore that name. There is one prayer, with which no other may compare, and which alone in Christendom bears the name of "the Lord's Prayer." But there is, at least on earth, no one psalm or hymn which bears the name of "the Lord's song." Whatever may be the case with the new song of the everlasting future, the religious hymnody of earth is and always has been almost infinitely varied in its expression. And yet at bottom it is one—one in its motive, one in its spirit and effect—one in its moral atmosphere. "The Lord's song!" What is it but the ascent of the soul towards the infinite and the eternal; the upward bound of the understanding, the expansion of the affections, the effort of faith, and hope, and love to utter themselves in praise; although the words, the languages, the rhythms, the melodies be most dissimilar? This, the true song of the Lord, springing out of the heart of the people of revelation, and embodying its creed in poems of the most varied age and character,—this it was which could not be uttered for the gratification of pagan Babylon without profanity.

"The Lord's song!" If it had only been the old poetry of the Hebrews, only their ancient

music, they might perhaps have consented to render it before a Babylonian audience. But for the Jews language was a much more sacred thing than, I fear, it is to us of the modern world. The Jews did not conceive of language as a something which might be stripped off thought, like bark off a tree; for them thought and language always went together. It is, alas! easy for us to utter or to hear in a concert-room the most sacred language, as if it meant nothing, and were only a sort of padding to the music; but this degradation—for such it is—would have been impossible in a more serious and simple age. The Hebrews could not use their old sacred poetry without thinking of what it meant as real: it was the outcome of their vivid faith in the One True God. The whole soul of the Hebrew singers went with it: "the Lord's song" sounded through the corridors of the soul before it took shape in language and resounded beneath the vaults of the temple. And this sense of its reality made it impossible for a good Jew to prostitute it for the benefit of a Pagan audience, who would think of it as merely a new sensation in art.

"The Lord's song!" Yes! That meant for Israel consecrated art. This is the privilege of art, that it may be hallowed to a Divine purpose. Poetry, music, painting, architecture—all have their place in the sanctuary of God. And what has been once given to Him is His; His irrevocably; His for

ever. The consecrated building cannot be given back to earthly uses without doing Him dishonour. And the poetry or music which has been dedicated to Him, and which has lifted souls up to Him for many a generation, cannot be divested of its sacred purpose and made the amusement of an infidel audience without wounding Him to Whom it also was offered by the faith and love of the gifted dead.

II

The Psalmist cannot sing that song because he is in "a strange land." Let us dwell on that expression : it reveals the motive of the Psalmist's silence.

It will show us what the motive of the Psalmist's silence is not. It is not sulkiness, moodiness, a determination to inflict upon the Babylonian master such disappointment as is still in the power of a captive and a slave. It is not a subtle pride—the pride of race heightened by the pride begotten of failure; which will not accept an invitation to add something to the brightness and interest of Chaldæan life. Nor is it an unreasonable coyness, like that of Queen Vashti, when, on a great public occasion, she declined the duties of her position at the court of Ahasuerus.[1] Vashti was

[1] Esther i. 10–12.

thinking of herself: the Psalmist, as we shall see, of One infinitely greater.

1. "A strange land!" This was apparent, first of all, in the difference of language. Although the Babylonian tongue had affinities with the Hebrew, it was practically, for the Jews, a foreign language. We know how it affects us when we first go abroad, to hear another than our mother tongue being talked all around us. It produces, at first, a strange sense of isolation; and this must have been deepened, in the case of the Jews, by the fact that they certainly did not go to Babylon for their own satisfaction. How much this one circumstance impressed the Jews is plain from the allusions in the prophets. "A people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive," was, according to Isaiah,[1] one of the dreaded terrors of the Captivity: and Ezekiel is encouraged to set out on his unwelcome mission to the captive Israelites by being told that he is not sent "to many people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand."[2] In time, no doubt, the captive Jews learnt much of the language of their conquerors, and brought it back with them to Palestine: but at first it was a barrier between them. And this would, of itself, have made them unwilling to sing "the Lord's song" in their own Hebrew to strangers who could not even follow it.

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 19. [2] Ezek. iii. 6.

"A strange land!" Does not a Christian find himself in it when he finds himself among people to whom the language of the Christian creed and of the Christian heart is unknown—to whom that language even sounds like an unwelcome and repulsive jargon? The language of religion is and must be unintelligible to those who do not share the faith and the feelings which prompt it. "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."[1] And the sense that this is the case makes a Christian, in general society, often retire into himself, lest he should break his Master's precept against giving that which is holy unto the dogs, or casting the pearls of Heaven before swine.[2] If the soul is to sing the Lord's song with the lips as well as with the heart, it must be among those who speak its own language. They rouse its deepest sympathies into active expression; they follow and sustain and stimulate it. "My praise is of Thee in the great congregation; my vows will I perform in the sight of them that fear Him."[3]

2. "A strange land!" Babylon was the land of material wealth, of public and private magnificence. Everything in it was on a large scale, especially when compared with Palestine. According to Herodotus, the extent of the outer circuit of its

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14. [2] St. Matt. vii. 6.
[3] Ps. xxii. 25.

walls was about fifty-six miles, and these walls were strengthened by some two hundred and fifty towers. It was entered by a hundred gates; the gates themselves were made of brass, with brazen lintels and side-posts. The great river Euphrates flowed through it; and the quays on each side were of vast extent and beauty. The two buildings in it of commanding splendour were the temple of Belus or Bel, and the royal palace. Both had been rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar on a splendid scale; his name is read at this hour on the inscribed bricks and the sculptured fragments which remain.

According to one account,[1] the palace extended to both sides of the Euphrates: its separate parts were connected by a bridge, and by a tunnel under the bed of the river; while the towers round it rose to the height of some four hundred and twenty feet, that is to say, sixty feet higher than the cross of St. Paul's. Nor may we forget the hanging gardens of Nebuchadnezzar, rising in terraces one above another, and—whatever is to be said in detail as to their dimensions—certainly constructed on a very magnificent scale.

All this splendour was quite new to the captive Jews: they had left nothing like it behind them in Palestine. The palace of the descendants of Solomon was a very small building when compared with the vast edifice in coloured brick, covered

[1] Ctesias.

with emblems of Ninus and Semiramis, which was the home of the Babylonian monarch. The scale of the Babylonian court, of the army, of the public works, was imperial. Jerusalem was by comparison an insignificant provincial town; or, at best, like those little German towns which until lately had independent courts, when they are compared with Vienna or Paris. The literal sense of the words "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty,"[1] must have forced itself on the captives at their first sight of Babylon. Babylon was the great world-city of the age. Babylon had its attractions, no doubt; but it was not the place in which to sing "the Lord's song." That song proclaimed in its very earliest notes—witness the Psalm of Moses, *Domine, refugium*[2]—the insignificance of this human life at its best, the poverty and perishableness of all that belonged to time. The soul of man is, after all, finite. And when it is filled with this world, there is no room for the next. To live for the material is to lose hold on the spiritual. Where the pride of life flourishes in rank luxuriance, the finer aspirations of the soul have not much, if any, chance. The very sight of a splendour which belongs only to time exerts a repressive influence upon the spiritual faculty; and as the pious Jews gazed on the worldly magnificence of their conquerors, they saw in it

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 17. [2] Ps. xc.

only a snare and a danger. "Turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity, and quicken me in Thy way. The law of Thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver. I see that all things come to an end, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad."[1]

We could not ourselves well sing the *Gloria in Excelsis* in the Stock Exchange or in a West-End club: and the Jews felt that Babylon was not the place for singing the song of the Lord, which had been the joy and glory of their ancient sanctuary.

3. "A strange land!" Babylon was a land in which life was overshadowed by a vast idolatry. What this idolatry was, we may see in part on a visit to the British Museum. There are to be seen, at this hour, figures and inscriptions which might have been gazed on by the writer of this very Psalm, and which show how the Baal-worship which in different forms prevailed from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, was the most striking feature of the life of the imperial races which conquered Palestine. To this hour the ruins of what was the great temple of Belus within the city and of the temple of Birs-Nimrud without, show how powerfully this idolatry must have addressed itself to the senses of the people. And the same conclusion is warranted by the anxious warnings of Isaiah, in anticipation of the Captivity;

[1] Ps. cxix. 37, 72, 96.

and by the language of the later Psalmists in Babylon. Isaiah describes, with fine and indignant irony, how in Babylon "the smith with the tongs," and "the carpenter with his rule," would combine to make to make an idol "according to the beauty of a man"; and how worship would be paid to what was in reality only a "stock of a tree."[1] The Psalmist of the later epoch was probably inspired to write by the sight of the splendid imagery in the Babylonian temples, notably, perhaps, of the golden image of Belus:—

> "Their idols are silver and gold:
> Even the work of men's hands.
> They have mouths, and speak not:
> Eyes have they, and see not.
> They have ears, and hear not:
> Noses have they, and smell not.
> They have hands and handle not;
> Feet have they, and walk not:
> Neither speak they through their throat.
> They that make them are like unto them:
> And so are all such as put their trust in them."[2]

It was this idolatry which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resisted at the risk of their lives;[3] and at which Daniel struck a deadly blow when, according to the Alexandrian account, till lately read in our churches and undoubtedly embodying substantial history, he exposed the fraud of the

[1] Isa. xliv. 12–20. [2] Ps. cxv. 4–8.
[3] Dan. iii. 1–25.

priests of Baal, and destroyed the image.[1] And the author of Psalm cxix. feels himself throughout to be confronted with a vast system of falsehood, wielding enormous political and social power, persecuting the servants of the True God when it had an opportunity, and infecting the very air of thought and life with its pervading and noxious vapours. It is the consciousness of this which provokes the devotional intensity of this most gifted and exquisite Psalmist; his perpetually reiterated assurances of loyalty to the One True God, His Word, His law, His precepts, His statutes, His testimonies, His judgments, His saints, His worship, are so passionate and tender, because he is always conscious of the hateful darkness around:

> "Princes have persecuted me without a cause:
> But my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.
> The proud have had me exceedingly in derision:
> Yet have I not shrinked from Thy law.
> As for lies, I hate and abhor them:
> But Thy law do I love.
> Many there are that trouble me and persecute me:
> Yet do I not swerve from Thy testimonies."[2]

How could the old Psalms of Israel, instinct with the memories of David's life, of Solomon's glory, of the solemnities of the now destroyed Temple, be sung in such an atmosphere as this? If sacred

[1] *Bel and the Dragon*, 1–27, appointed in the old Lectionary as the first morning lesson for November 23.

[2] Ps. cxix. 161, 51, 163, 157.

associations were to have any value, if sacred words were to mean anything, could they be prostituted to the amusement of a race which was devoted to a hideous and cruel superstition? No! captive Israel might sing the songs of captivity—such as this very 119th Psalm itself—in secret assemblies of the faithful: but to render the old Temple hymns before a heathen crowd of idolaters for their mere amusement—this was impossible.

Is not the Christian soul often carried captive, nowadays, into the Babylon of unbelief, or of half-belief? Is not the place in thought which is due to God often tenanted by abstractions which are just as senseless as the idols of Babylon,—creations of our thought, instead of creations of our fingers? "Nature," "Force," "Law," and what not—generalisations of our own minds as we look out upon the Universe around us,—these are placed on the throne of the One Infinite, Eternal, Self-existent Being. Or if any Christianity is left, it is a Christianity which is too often certain of no one article of the Christian Creed,—which is at best a feeble, vague sentiment. This modern Christianity is the consecration, not of faith, but of doubt. "Are the Sacraments means of grace?"—"There is no saying." "Is the Bible inspired?"—"Possibly." "Has the Blood of Christ an atoning and cleansing power?"—"Perhaps." "Is Jesus Christ True God as well as True Man?"—"There is

something to be said for it." "Does the Holy Spirit sanctify the hearts of Christians?"—"It is not quite impossible that He does." "Is God Three, and yet One?"—"We must not be too dogmatic about it." "Is He a Personal Being, or only a stream of tendency making for righteousness?"—"Who shall say, since the literary men hesitate?" Oh my brethren, who shall sing the Lord's song in such a strange land of half-belief as this? Whom are we to sing it to? What are we to sing about? How can we go to work at all where all is so vague and uncertain; where nothing is clear above our heads, and nothing solid beneath our feet? "The Lord's song," indeed! Certainly if we are to sing the *Te Deum*, or the *Gloria in Excelsis*, we must be *bonâ fide* Christians—men who really believe that the creed of Christendom is true. We may do much else of a different kind, no doubt, in this state of mind, which just attributes a qualified probability to the Christian faith, or to certain parts of it; but, as for singing the Lord's song with that kind of sincerity which is owned in heaven—the thing is possible.

4. "A strange land!" Babylon was the land of gigantic sins. We see this in the short prophecy of Habbakuk. Habbakuk was shocked and perplexed by the fact that these Chaldæans, the conquerors and punishers of the Jews, were more sinful than their victims!

"Thou art," he cries, "of purer eyes than to behold evil,
And canst not look on iniquity:
Wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously,
And holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he!" [1]

Habbakuk describes the sins of the conquering nation in detail. Its drunkenness, its debauchery, its grasping avarice, its bloodthirstiness, its stupid and degrading idolatry, its passion and energy in the propagation of hideous vice: all these form features of his description. There hung over all the magnificence of Babylon a dense atmosphere of sin, which made it impossible for the servants of God to sing His song—to do more than complain: "How long, O Lord, how long?" [2]

And the regenerate soul may be carried captive, we many of us know too well, into the Babylon of deadly sin. It may be carried captive, and at once make its escape and return. Happy they with whom it fares thus! Though the solitary return across the intervening desert of repentance be long and weary, happy if their true home be reached at last! "They shall come with songs to Zion: and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." [3]

But supposing the soul is detained in Babylon—supposing that habits of evil are formed, and that the enfeebled will is held down by bolts and bars

[1] Hab. i. 13. [2] *Ib.* 2. [3] Isa. xxxv. 10.

which it cannot break, then how is it to sing "the Lord's song"? How is it to mount up on the wings of desire and hope to the Throne of the All-Holy, Whose laws it the while sets steadily at defiance? It may indeed utter the words; it may accurately render the musical notation: it may observe the laws of harmony and of time with faultless precision. What is all this but a frightful mockery, if the inner spring of true praise is wanting; if there is nothing to prompt the words which are uttered by the mouth; if it be a case of honouring God with the lips, while the heart is far from Him?[1] How can we sing the praises of our Maker, if we are not thankful to Him for the gift of an undying existence? or of our Redeemer, if our hearts do not tell us that we have been again washed in His Blood, and have not defiled our garments? or of our Sanctifier, if we know that we have grieved Him, and that He has taken Himself from us? Better far—I had almost allowed myself to say—better far sing the songs of Babylon itself, than burn out the last surviving tendernesses of conscience, by a service which cannot but be as odious to God as it is degrading to ourselves!

We may well indeed feel, all of us, that this life is an exile from our true home; and that while we live it, we cannot, at our best, sing aright the song of the Redeemed. The "new song" of the four

[1] St. Matt. xv. 7, 8; Isa. xxix. 13.

creatures and of the four and twenty elders before the Lamb;[1] the "new song," which no man could learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth;[2] "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," which is sung by them that have gotten the victory over the beast, and that stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God[3]—what is all this but a psalmody of the blessed, with the volume and perfections of which nothing on earth can compare? Here we sing, as it were, hesitatingly and by snatches, since we have, most of us, been carried captive to some Babylon of worldliness, or of unbelief, or of sin: and there is that which still checks or chokes in us the true voice of the soul. Then, when we shall have reached "the city of our solemnities;" then, when the gates of the Eternal Zion, conjubilant with song, open before us; then, when neither the world nor sin nor unbelief can mar the freedom of our utterance, we may hope to join

> "our cheerful songs
> With angels round the Throne;
> Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
> But all their joys are one."

[1] Rev. v. 8–10. [2] *Ib.* xiv. 3. [3] *Ib.* xv. 2, 3.

SERMON III

THE INSCRIPTION ON "GREAT PAUL"

"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"—1 Cor. ix. 16.

During the course of the last week or ten days, many of you will have gathered from the public prints that a new bell, of great weight and size, is to be shortly placed in the north-western tower of St. Paul's Cathedral. It will be of heavier metal than any other in London, or in this country;[1] it will take its rank among the six or eight largest bells in Europe; and there is good reason to hope that its rich and melodious tone will not be unworthy of its weight and bulk. Like most other works of public interest and usefulness in the metropolis, the bell is largely indebted for its existence to the munificence and public spirit of the Corporation and Companies of the City of London; while for

[1] The bell weighs 16¾ tons.

the excellence of its tone we must trace its obligations to the genius and perseverance which within the last ten years has already done so much for the music of this Cathedral Church.[1] Londoners, perhaps, will feel that it will add a new circumstance of interest even to this great city; and we may hope that, however indirectly, it will also benefit that which we, the clergy of this Church, must have most at heart—the cause of religion.

It is as easy, my brethren, to underrate as to overrate the real, that is the religious, importance of a matter of this kind. Certainly, a church bell is not a vital or saving truth; it is not a purified and consecrated heart. It belongs to the world of matter, and not to the world of spirit. It lies on the extreme circumference of that complex mass of interests which go to make up or to assist the practical manifestations of religious life; it cannot for a moment enter into comparison with anything that lies near or about the centre. But it is not, therefore, without its due measure of importance. Anything external and artistic that asserts for the immaterial world its due claims upon the thoughts and hearts of men; anything that resists the encompassing pressure and importunity of matter; anything that, though itself matter, proclaims and

[1] It is unnecessary to say that the reference is to Dr. (now Sir John) Stainer, of whose great services St. Paul's has recently (1888) been deprived.

advertises the reality of a higher and spiritual existence, has a certain value which cannot be overlooked. It acts insensibly upon the public imagination; it moulds and sways the less conscious processes of popular thought. No religious man will assign too much importance to this; no prudent man will altogether neglect it.

It has been observed that here, in London, the place which is assigned to religion in public thought owes something to the fact that the most striking building in the metropolis, taken altogether, is its Cathedral; and it may be that hereafter something less, yet something worth having, may be traced to its great bell. For a church bell, in virtue of the associations of centuries, reminds us of two things, at least, which concern religion most nearly; it reminds us of prayer, and it reminds us of death. And this new bell has upon it an inscription which will account for my having said so much about it now and here: "Væ mihi si non evangelisavero!" —"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

I

What were the circumstances which drew from St. Paul this exclamation, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel"?

Some events had occurred at Corinth which led St. Paul to assert his claim to be maintained, if he

chose, at the cost of the Church. He pleads that he only claims what was already granted to other apostles. He points to the analogy of other occupations: no soldier lives at his own expense; the vine-dresser and the shepherd are alike supported by the produce of their labour.[1] The Levitical Law, when ruling that the "ox which trode out the corn was not to be muzzled," had a broader and deeper object in view than the "care of oxen."[2] The spiritual workman was not to be hampered with the duty of providing for the necessaries of physical life. It surely was not much to ask that the sowers of spiritual blessings should reap the "carnal things"—the temporal aid—of their people?[3] Under the old Law, the ministrants at the altar live of the sacrifices;[4] and it was by the ordinance of Christ our Lord Himself that the Gospel labourer was to live of the Gospel.[5]

We might suppose that the Apostle is on the point of pressing his own claim at the conclusion of this chain of arguments. But no. There is no doubt about his right; but, in view of higher considerations, he never did, and never will, exact what it should secure to him. He refuses to do this, not because he admits that his opponents are justified in saying that he is no true Apostle at all; but because, in waiving it, he finds that he gains

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 7. [2] *Ib.* 9, 10. [3] *Ib.* 11.
[4] *Ib.* 13. [5] *Ib.* 14.

immensely in moral power; that he has enlarged opportunities of access to all sorts and conditions of men. This, then, is his "glory," or ground of thankful exultation, that he works for the Gospel of Christ and for souls while supporting himself by his own labour, although he has, by the Law of Christ, by the old Jewish Law, and as a matter of natural justice, a full right to be supported by the Church. But his work in preaching the Gospel is not itself a subject of glory. He has no discretion about it. To others it may seem that his life and work are what they are, because such incessant movement, struggles, persecutions, proclamation of unwelcome truth, is agreeable to an eccentric taste or to an energetic and restless character. He himself knows that it is otherwise; he is driven forward in his great life-work by one particular instinct of commanding power; the instinct of moral self-preservation. "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

"Woe is unto me!" We can remember, perhaps, some modern writer with whom an exclamation of this kind is almost conventional; with whom it implies nothing more than a passing sensation of modified annoyance at something which haunts the memory or which traverses the will. But this is not the case with the deeply serious and impassioned

Apostle. "Woe is me!" is an exclamation which occurs nowhere else in the writings of St. Paul. But it has a history in the prophetic literature of the Hebrews, and St. Paul uses it with a full knowledge of its meaning. Under the cover of this indefinite but weird word "Woe!" the Prophets called down penal suffering upon persons, countries, causes, enterprises, which were opposed to the Will of God; and our Lord employed the same word in the same sense as the Prophets, though with higher authority. He invoked woe upon the Scribes and Pharisees; woe upon the lawyers; woe upon the selfish rich; woe upon the unthinking and light-hearted; woe upon the universally popular; woe upon those by whom offences come. Some of His sentences run thus: "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." [1] "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had never been born." [2] Thus the word is a prophecy and an imprecation; it anticipates and invites most real although indefinite evil; and it does not change its character when it is invoked by a speaker upon himself. "Woe is me," cries a captive Psalmist, "that I am constrained to dwell with

[1] St. Luke vi. 24–26. [2] St. Matt. xxvi. 24.

Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!"[1] "Woe is me!" exclaims Isaiah, deeply conscious of his own sinfulness, at the vision in the Temple, "for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."[2] "Woe is me, my mother," cries Jeremiah, in the despair of his protracted and seemingly fruitless struggles, "that thou hast borne me a man of strife!"[3] "If I be wicked," says Job to his friends, with reference to their cruel and false explanation of the calamities which had come on him—"If I be wicked, woe unto me!"[4]

St. Paul, then, is employing an expression of acknowledged solemnity which for him, we may be very sure, had not lost its freshness. He predicts and invokes evil upon himself if it should ever happen that he ceased, while in this life, to preach the good news of God to men. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

II

As we think over the words, we are perhaps at first disposed to credit the Apostle with a touch of exaggeration. It was, we grant, a very good, even an heroic, thing to preach the Gospel. If the Roman society thought him mad, the Christian

[1] Ps. cxx. 5. [2] Isa. vi. 5.
[3] Jer. xv. 10. [4] Job x. 15.

Church was sure that he was inspired; and, at any rate, as a free man he was within his rights, and as a good man he was doing what he believed to be the best that could be done with his life. But supposing he had settled down quietly, as a private Christian, in Tarsus or elsewhere, putting what truth he knew into practice as best he could, and saying little or nothing about it, why should he think that any harm would happen to him? There are many men who have in them the tastes, the habits, the capacities of mind and temper which go to form a great statesman—men, too, who are conscious of their power—but whose voices are never even heard on a platform or in Parliament. Would they be using sober and serious language if they were on this account to imprecate woe upon themselves? There are born artists who never paint, born architects who never build, born authors who never write, born military leaders who never wear an epaulette; men with natural capacity for this or that kind of work, but who somehow never undertake it. It is a misfortune, no doubt, in a certain sense, for themselves and for the world. It is better for all of us, and indisputably better for each man himself, when he finds himself doing that work for which God has fitted him by nature and circumstances. But if we were to hear such a man say, "Woe is me, if I do not practise medicine, or plead at the bar, or keep the accounts of a great

firm, or command a merchant-ship," we should think him exaggerating. We should say to him, "My good man! it is a pity that you are not making the best you can of yourself. But, after all, there are other things in the world to be done besides that on which you have set your heart; and it is better to take a quieter and more moderate view of your case." Why may not something of this kind be said of St. Paul, exclaiming, with such vehemence, to the Corinthians, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel"?

Ah! why? It is, first of all, because St. Paul felt that if he were not to preach the Gospel he would be doing violence to his sense of justice. The Gospel was not his in such a sense that he had any right to keep it to himself. What was the Gospel? It was the good news of God. It was the Divine message, warranted to be Divine by certificates whose worth could not be mistaken. It was the message which announced that, if men would believe, earth and heaven, God and man, might be reconciled. "Preaching the Gospel" is one of those phrases of the Bible which, like coin that has been long in circulation, has been degraded and vulgarised by constant use. It may mean here or there only a distorted view of some seven chapters of the New Testament, to the practical neglect of all the rest; only the recurrence of

a few stock phrases addressed to some very narrow mood of feeling. We know some of the meagre associations which have clustered, to its detriment, around this inspired expression. By the Gospel is sometimes meant only a thin extract from the religion of the New Testament, according to which we are justified by emotions divorced from morality, and may measure our Christian freedom by our indifference to the means of grace, and our spirituality by the licence of general irreverence. The Gospel which St. Paul preached was larger, nobler, more generous, more true. The very word "Gospel" implied that mankind was in a bad case, and needed something to reassure and to help them. It implied that men were conscious of being ill at ease, and were looking out, at any rate at intervals, for a deliverer. We find traces of this in the whole Jewish and pagan world; and we know, as St. Paul knew, that these misgivings and yearnings were well grounded. A dark shadow had passed between God and man since the first age of man's life on earth; it was the shadow of sin. Sin had veiled from man the face of God; it had opened a gulf between earth and heaven; it had given a perverse bent and twist to all in human nature that was meant to lead to God; it had robbed man of his original robe of righteousness, and thereby had darkened his understanding; it had blunted his affections; it had weakened and warped his will.

We often know that we are ill without knowing precisely what is the matter with us; and this was the case with the large mass of human beings in the ancient pre-Christian world. Therefore, first of all, God opened the eyes of men to see what their case really was. Nature and conscience did something in this way for the heathen nations;[1] the Law of Moses did a great deal more for the Jews. By the Law was the knowledge of sin;[2] the Law was a lantern, burning with a bright moral light, and revealing the dark and unlovely forms which human life had assumed under the impetus and operation of sin. But the Law only discovered to the patient his real condition; it did not and could not cure him. It only made his misery more intense, because more intelligent; it made the moral demand for a real remedy greater than ever, but it did not supply that for which it made men crave.

Then came the real cure, not from earth, but from heaven; not from man's strength, or virtue, or intelligence, but from God. God so loved the human world, that He gave His Son to save it.[3] When no other or lesser being could bring help, the Infinite and the Eternal appeared among us, under the conditions which we call space and time. He came clothed in a Human Body and in a Human Soul, and in this created form He laid

[1] Rom. i. 20; ii. 15. [2] *Ib.* iii. 20. [3] St. John iii. 16.

Himself in a manger; He died upon a Cross. He offered a life of perfect symmetry, faultlessness, obedience, culminating in a death of entire self-sacrifice, to the Father in heaven; and henceforth all who are truly united to Him, by faith on their part, by gifts of grace, given through appointed channels, on His, are, as His Apostle says, "accepted in the Beloved."[1]

This is the core or essence of the Gospel, although it has collateral and dependent truths which cannot really be separated from it, ranging forth in this direction and in that, and worthy of all men to be believed. But clearly such a Gospel as this was not meant only for one or two men, for a company of men, for a single nation, for a single race. "Is He the God of the Jews only?"[2] was St. Paul's indignant question addressed to those who would have limited His favours to the Jewish people. Like the sun in the heavens, the Incarnate Sun of Righteousness is the property—we may dare to use that word—of all the members of the human family; all have a right to the light and warmth which radiate from His Sacred Person, from His Redeeming Cross. And this explains St. Paul's sense of the justice of proclaiming the good news of the reconciliation in Christ of earth and heaven to all members of the human family. Every man, as such, had a natural right to his

[1] Eph. i. 6. [2] Rom. iii. 29.

share in the Gospel; just as every man has a right to air, and water, and freedom, and, at least, sufficient food to preserve bodily life. Not to preach the Gospel—to hoard it as if it were the luxury of a small clique, like some of the old philosophies, or a rare book in a library, or a family portrait—was to offend against the sense of natural justice, and to increase the woe which, as nature whispers, is sooner or later inseparable from doing this. "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

But, in St. Paul's mind, not to preach the Gospel was yet more emphatically to sin against the instinct of generosity. The feature in the Redemption, which strikes St. Paul, which takes possession of him, which awes his reason while it takes his heart captive, is the extraordinary generosity of the Redeemer. What was there in the human race, what was there in the individual sinner, I do not say to compel, but to invite, such an effusion of Divine Love? For, if any one point is clear in the New Testament, it is that not merely the collective Church, but each single member of it, has a distinct place and recognition in the eternal counsels, and in the all-embracing heart of God. Each may say, as though each was alone the object of the Redemption, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."[1] St. Paul felt this to be

[1] Gal. ii. 20

especially true in his own case. He was a Jew, a Pharisee, an active persecutor, an enemy of the Crucified, a ravager and destroyer of His Church. He was sincere in that old life of fanatical error and violence, and God would not leave him to himself. On the road to Damascus, he was brought, by a flash of light from heaven, into real spiritual contact with the Divine Lord, risen and glorified, Whom he had so bitterly opposed; and the result was a change in his whole view of himself and of God, of life and duty; a change, profound, vital, ineffaceable. And then followed the visions in which the Lord Jesus Himself sketched out the great work which he was to do.[1] And then, later on, the Ordination; at which older ministers of Christ formally transmitted to him the powers which they had already received from heaven.[2] All this left upon St. Paul's mind an indelible impression. He felt that, whatever he might once have seemed to be, he was no longer his own master; that the Eternal Love had swept down upon his life in its misery and shame; had transformed it; had translated him to a new sphere of glory and of labour. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. However for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all

[1] Acts ix. 11–16. [2] *Ib.* xiii. 2, 3.

long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."[1]

This, then, was the second reason which prompted St. Paul's exclamation. As he dared not offend against the law of justice, which bade him give to the world the truth which belonged to it; so, even more, he could outrage the law of gratitude which bound him to the Redeemer, Who had bought him with His Blood. Even with heathen moralists the obligations of gratitude are reckoned imperative. Even the lower animals show their share in some departments of our moral nature, by their practical acknowledgment of kindnesses received at the hand of man. We all remember the story of the lion in the amphitheatre, who recognised the Christian by whom he had been tended in former years in the desert. Such a sentence as "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"[2] measures St. Paul's sense of obligation to his Lord and Saviour; and if this sense was to take a practical form, it could only be by his doing his best to spread abroad among men a knowledge and love of the Redemption. "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

But, once more, not to preach the Gospel would have been, in St. Paul's case, to be false to the

[1] 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. [2] Rom v. 8.

imperious commands of truth. Truth is a stern mistress, and, if we serve her at all, we serve her, not on our own terms, but on hers. We cannot really make selections, and choose so much service and leave the rest undone; we must do her bidding, or be dismissed. The Gospel came to St. Paul as it comes to all of us, as a body of truth which could only be really held on condition of its being propagated by the holder. Not to do something towards propagating the Gospel is not to believe it; it is to treat the Gospel as though it were at best only partially or relatively true. The Gospel is nothing if it be not absolutely true; true for all men and for all times. It is nothing if it is not the Universal Religion; "the power of God unto salvation to *every* man that believeth."[1] Hence, that the Gospel should be propagated according to the opportunities of the believer, is not merely a legitimate inference which may or may not be drawn from it; it is as much an integral part of the Gospel as anything else in it. The case is very different with false religions, with private speculations, with human philosophies; to hold them is one thing, to make efforts to disseminate them is another. To believe the Gospel, and to do nothing for its acceptance among men, is a contradiction in terms. Unless you can separate in fact, as well as in idea, the convex

[1] Rom. i. 16.

and concave sides of a circular vase, you must, when you believe a religion which, as being absolutely true, is also the Universal Religion, do what you may to induce others to believe it also.

Enough has, perhaps, been said—though it is little enough in view of what might be said—to explain St. Paul's conditional imprecation of woe upon himself. He could not trifle with the great laws which lie at the basis of the moral life of every human soul; with the law of justice, the law of gratitude, the law of truth. These laws bade him preach Christ's Gospel. And to turn a deaf ear to them, to resist them, was to break up his moral nature from within; it was to tear it up by the roots; it was to incur, first, in the solemn depths of his own conscience, and then at a higher tribunal, a sentence of penal woe, the dark misery of which it was impossible to exaggerate.

III

"Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!" This is a motto for every portion and member of the Church of Christ. Particular Churches have their periods of energetic life, and their intervals of inertness and decay. There are epochs when the great truths of the Christian Creed are prominently and livingly present to the conscience of a

particular Church. There are intervals when truth is obscured, or kept in the background, or mutilated, or overlaid by matter of comparatively slight importance. At such times a Church is in danger. A Church's strength ever lies, not in her external supports, but in her inward vitality; in her faithfulness to that whole body of truth, which alone accounts for her existence. When she forgets this, she is in a fair way to forfeit her candlestick.[1]

Not seldom in her history has the Church of Christ been tempted to proclaim something other or less than the Gospel. So it was in the Apostolic age, and in the presence of St. Paul himself. There were clever and accomplished Greeks at Corinth and elsewhere, hovering around the doors of the Church, feeling and expressing much sympathy with many sides of Christianity, but withheld from conversion, at least so they said, by what seemed to them the strange and repulsive doctrine of the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ crucified. They wanted a Gospel without the Cross. And what was St. Paul's reply? "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ";[2] "We preach Christ crucified . . . to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God."[3] He could say no otherwise. Woe to him, had he not thus preached the Gospel!

[1] Rev. ii. 5. [2] Gal. vi. 14. [3] 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

So it was in the fourth century. Arianism, that shrewd endeavour of human ingenuity to keep some terms with the language of the New Testament, while denying the real Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ—that celebrated effort to project into the Christian imagination the idea of a Christ who should be more than human, yet less than absolutely Divine,—Arianism, in alliance with the Byzantine Court, and with a large section of the literary class, tempted the Church again to say something less on the subject of our Lord's Adorable Person than she had said and believed since Pentecost. And what was the Church's reply? It was the famous sentence which we repeat to-day in the Nicene Creed: "I believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God . . . of One Substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made." She could say nothing else or less. Woe to her, if she had not then preached the Gospel!

So it was in the fifteenth century, the age of the Renaissance. The old literature of pagan Greece and Rome had been just rediscovered; and for a time the learned fairly lost their heads at the discovery. Such was the attraction of this long-buried world of classical thoughts and writings, that Christians actually professed themselves ashamed of "the jargon of St. Paul," and unable to express even religious ideas except in the phrases of Plato or of Cicero. The Church was

bidden refashion herself upon the model of the very paganism which she had conquered by suffering a thousand years before. And what was her answer? The Renaissance might be very well; but for Christians, the first consideration was the Law and honour of Christ. The reply of Christendom took widely different forms in Northern and in Southern Europe; but, in either case, its spirit was substantially this, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

And in our own day the old temptation presents itself, but in an altered mien. To-day the Church is face to face with a world of thought, which is in a hundred ways hostile to her, but which is often willing to be friendly, if friendship can be secured on its own terms. "There is much good still in Christianity," so we are told; "its moral precepts, or some of them; the example of its Founder, or parts of it; the literature which was created at its birth, and which, with few intervals, marks its passage across the centuries;—these will always be among the treasures of the world. But, then," it is added, "the day has arrived for something more than a change of front. If Christianity is to keep on good terms with the modern world, Christians must give up the supernatural. They must be content with a Christ who is perfect, but simply human; with a Calvary that is the scene of a self-sacrifice, but not of an atonement; with

prayer that refreshes the suppliant, but does not move the Will of God; with Sacraments that are poetical signs of absent blessings, not means whereby we are actually united to the Divine Redeemer."

And what are we to say to all this, as we look at our title-deeds in the New Testament, as we review the history of Christendom all down the centuries, as we ask ourselves what is wanted to meet the real needs of the human soul, as we reflect that, within a few years, the generation which confronts us will be lying with ourselves beneath the sod, and some new mood will have passed over the ever-changing mind of man? Ah! what can the Christian Church say but that which her great Apostle said eighteen hundred years ago? —"Your demands can never be conceded; unless we are to be traitors to the Truth which we have received, and to your own dearest interests. 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!'"

These, too, are words which no ordained man can afford to forget. You, my brethren of the laity, expect much, and you rightly expect much, of us the clergy. You are quick to note our failures, and our inconsistencies; and we certainly have no right or wish to complain of you, if you judge us by the Divine standard which it is our business to enforce. But, perhaps, if you knew

more of the temptations of a clerical life, you would not, as I hope, judge us less sternly, but you would help us better by your prayers. To preach the Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel, out of the pulpit as well as in it, in general intercourse as well as at home, before its opponents as well as before believers, is not easy. Many are the temptations to mutilate known truth, to twist it, to exaggerate it, to mistake the inspirations of passion for the inspirations of faithfulness, to mistake the promptings of cowardice for lofty spiritual prudence. Many are the temptations to substitute doing good in a general way, which is, indeed, often one of our accompanying privileges, for that which is our proper work as Christ's ambassadors; to substitute a Gospel of benevolence, of philanthropy, of literary refinement, for that real message from heaven which was ever on the lips of Christ's first Apostles, and without which all else is but a poor and heartless trifling with the most solemn interests of dying men. And on this day in the year especially,[1] if on any, this should be borne in mind, when, in almost every diocese, young clergymen are being sent forth, furnished with a heavenly commission, on their difficult task, and when they need the prayer and sympathy of all good Christians to enable them to be true, even in a moderate degree, to their Ordination vows.

[1] Fourth Sunday in Advent, 1881.

May it not be that if no prayers, no living interest, follow on their steps, and they fail grievously to do justice to the truth and grace entrusted to them, the resulting woe will not be altogether theirs; that it will be shared, according to a law of inexorable justice, with those who might have helped them, and who left them to themselves?

"Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!" Every Christian man and woman may, in a true sense, make these words his own. For most assuredly every life preaches something, not necessarily in set discourses, not perhaps by anything that passes the lips, but by its whole drift and character. Not Apostles only, but the humblest Christians, may be a saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death;[1] every soul has its special Apostolate of this kind or of that. The days and hours pass, and we are all of us leaving around us moral effects, impressions, convictions of truth or the reverse, which will not cease when we ourselves pass away from this earthly scene, or when those who receive them follow or precede us. In view of this vast vista of responsibilities, surely every Christian soul may well exclaim, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

Well, then, it is that this inscription is to be written on the great bell of St. Paul's. The sentence

[1] 2 Cor. ii. 16.

comes straight from the heart of the great Apostle whose Church this is; and it summarises, in a brief and vigorous form, all that was characteristic of the thought and temper of his noble and saintly soul. When, as we hope, this bell sounds forth over London next Easter Day, when it sounds on in the years that will follow, after we of this generation shall have gone to our account, let us trust that it will suggest other and higher thoughts than any which belong only to this passing scene; that its deep and solemn tones will bear in on the soul of many a listener the thought of the second coming, the thought of Eternity, the thought of the many and intricate issues which depend on each man's making the best efforts that he may to know and to spread abroad Christ's everlasting Gospel during the fleeting days and hours of time.

SERMON IV

THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES AFTER DEATH

"Then shall I know, even as also I am known."—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

An Indian officer, who in his time had seen a great deal of service, and had taken part in more than one of those decisive struggles by which the British authority was finally established in the East Indies, had returned to end his days in this country, and was talking with his friends about the most striking experiences of his professional career. They led him, by their sympathy and their questions, to travel in memory through a long series of years; and as he described skirmishes, battles, sieges, personal encounters, hair-breadth escapes, the outbreak of the mutiny and its suppression, reverses, victories—all the swift alternations of anxiety and hope which a man must know who is entrusted with command, and is before the enemy—their interest in his story, as was natural,

became keener and more exacting. At last he paused with the observation, "I expect to see something much more remarkable than anything I have been describing." As he was some seventy years of age, and was understood to have retired from active service, his listeners failed to catch his meaning. There was a pause; and then he said in an undertone, "I mean in the first five minutes after death."

"The first five minutes after death!" Surely the expression is worth remembering, if only as that of a man to whom the life to come was evidently a great and solemn reality. "The first five minutes." If we may employ for the moment when speaking of eternity standards of measurement which belong to time, it is at least conceivable that, after the lapse of some thousands or tens of thousands of years, we shall have lost all sense of a succession in events; that existence will have come to seem to be only a never-ceasing present; an unbegun and unending *now*. It is, I say, at least conceivable that this will be so; but can we suppose that at the moment of our entrance on that new and wonderful world we shall already think and feel as if we had always been there, or had been there, at least, for ages?

There is, no doubt, an impression sometimes to be met with that death is followed by a state of unconsciousness.

"If sleep and death be truly one,
And every spirit's folded bloom,
Through all its intervital gloom,
In some long trance should slumber on,

"Unconscious of the sliding hour,
Bare of the body, might it last,
And silent traces of the past
Be all the colour of the flower."

But that is a supposition which is less due to the exigencies of reason than to the sensitiveness of imagination. The imagination recoils from the task of anticipating a moment so full of awe and wonder as must be that of the introduction of a conscious spirit to the invisible world. And, accordingly, the reason essays to persuade itself, if it can, that life after death will not be conscious life, although it is difficult to recognise a single reason why, if life, properly speaking, survives at all, it should forfeit consciousness. Certainly the life of the souls under the heavenly altar, who intercede perpetually with God for the approach of the Last Judgment,[1] is not an unconscious life. Certainly the paradise which our Lord promised to the dying thief[2] cannot be reasonably imagined to have been a moral and mental slumber, any more than can those unembodied ministers of God who do His pleasure, who are sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation,[3] be supposed to

[1] Rev. vi. 9, 10. [2] St. Luke xxiii. 43. [3] Heb. i. 14.

reach a condition no higher than that which is produced by chloroform. No, this supposition of an unconscious state after death is a discovery, not of Revelation, not of reason, but of desire; of a strong desire on the one hand to keep a hold on immortality, and on the other to escape the risks which immortality may involve. It cannot well be doubted that consciousness,—if not retained to the last in the act of dying, if suspended by sleep, or by physical disease, or by derangement—must be recovered as soon as the act of death is completed, with the removal of the cause which suspended it. Should this be the case, the soul will enter upon another life with the habits of thought which belong to time still clinging to it; they will be unlearnt gradually, if at all, in the after-ages of existence. And, assuredly, the first sense of being in another world must be overwhelming. Imagination can, indeed, form no worthy estimate of it; but we may do well to try to think of it as best we can this afternoon, since it is at least one of the approaches to the great and awful subject which should be before our thoughts at this time of the year, namely, the second coming of Jesus Christ to Judgment. And here the Apostle comes to our assistance with his anticipation of the future life, as a life of enormously enhanced knowledge: "Then shall I know, even as also I am known." [1]

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

He is thinking, no doubt, of that life as a whole, and not of the first entrance on it, immediately after death. No doubt, also, he is thinking of the high privileges of the blessed, whose knowledge, we may presume to say, with some great teachers of the Church, will be thus vast and comprehensive because they will see all things in God, as in the ocean of truth. But it cannot be supposed that an increase of knowledge after death will be altogether confined to the blessed. The change itself must bring with it the experience which is inseparable from a new mode of existence: it must unveil secrets; it must discover vast tracts of fact and thought for every one of the sons of men. Let us try to keep it before our minds, reverently and earnestly, for a few minutes; and let us ask ourselves, accordingly, what will be the most startling additions to our existing knowledge at our first entrance on the world to come.

I

First, then, at our entrance on another state of being, we shall know what it is to exist under entirely new conditions. Here we are bound up—we hardly suspect, perhaps, how intimately—in thought and affection, with the persons and objects around us. They influence us subtly and powerfully in a thousand ways; in some cases they

altogether shape the course of life. In every life, it has been truly said, much more is taken for granted than is ever noticed. The mind is eagerly directed to the few persons and subjects which affection or interest force prominently upon its notice; it gazes inertly at all the rest. As we say, it does not take them in, until some incident arises which forces them one by one into view. A boy never knows what his home was worth until he has gone for the first time to school; and then he misses, and as he misses he eagerly recollects and realises, all that he has left behind him. Who of us that has experienced it can ever forget those first hours at school after leaving home; that moment when the partings were over, and the carriage drove away from the door, and we heard the last of the wheels and of the horses as they went round the corner, and then turned to find ourselves in a new world, among strange faces and in strange scenes, and under a new and perhaps sterner government? Then for the first time, and at a distance from it, we found out what our home had been to us. It was more to us in memory than it had ever been while we were in it. All that we saw, and heard, and had to do, and had to give up at school, presented a contrast which stimulated our memories of what had been the rule of home—of its large liberty, of its gentle looks and words, of its scenes and haunts, which had taken

such a hold on our hearts without our knowing it. It was too much; we had to shrink away into some place where we could be alone, and recover ourselves as best we could before we were able to fall in with the ways of our new life. No doubt, in time, habit did its work; habit turned school, I will not say into a second home, but into a new and less agreeable kind of home. And as the years passed, we saw repeated again and again in the case of others that which we had experienced at first, and with a vividness that did not admit of repetition in ourselves.

This may enable us, in a certain sense, to understand what is in store for all of us at our entrance, by dying, into the unseen world. I do not, of course, mean that this life is our home, and that the future at all necessarily corresponds to school as being an endless banishment. God forbid! If we only will have it, the exact reverse of this shall be the case. But the parallel will so far hold good that at death we must experience a sense of strangeness to which nothing in this life has even approached. Not merely will the scene be new—to us as yet it is unimaginable; not merely will the beings around us—the shapes, forms, conditions of existence, be strange—they are as yet inconceivable; but we ourselves shall have undergone a change; a change so complete that we cannot here and now anticipate its full meaning. We

shall exist, thinking and feeling, and exercising memory and will and understanding; but—without bodies. Think what that means. We are at present at home in the body; we have not yet learnt, by losing it, what the body is to us. The various activities of the soul are sorted out and appropriated by the several senses of the body, so that the soul's action from moment to moment is made easy, we may well conceive, by being thus distributed. What will it be to compress all that the senses now achieve separately into a single act; to see, but without these eyes; to hear, but without these ears; to experience something purely supersensuous that shall answer to the grosser senses of taste and smell; and to see, hear, smell, and taste by a single movement of the spirit, combining all these separate modes of apprehension into one? What will it be to find ourselves with the old self, divested of this body which has clothed it since its first moment of existence; able to achieve, it may be so much, it may be so little; living on, but under conditions so totally new? This experience alone will add no little to our existing knowledge; and the addition will have been made in the first five minutes after death.

II

And the entrance on the next world must bring with it a knowledge of God such as is impossible in this life. In this life many men talk of God, and some men think much and deeply about Him. But here men do not attain to that sort of direct knowledge of God which the Bible calls "sight." We do not see a human soul. The soul makes itself felt in conduct, in conversation, in the lines of the countenance; although these often enough mislead us. The soul speaks through the eye, which misleads us less often. That is to say, we know that the soul is there, and we detect something of its character and power and drift. We do not see it. In the same way we feel God present in nature, whether in its awe or its beauty; and in human history, whether in its justice or its weird mysteriousness; and in the life of a good man, or the circumstances of a generous or noble act. Most of all we feel Him near when conscience, His inward messenger, speaks plainly and decisively to us. Conscience, that invisible prophet, surely appeals to and implies a law, and a law implies a legislator. But we do not see Him. "No man hath seen God at any time;" even "the only-begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father," is only said to have "declared Him,"[1]

[1] St. John i. 18.

since in Him the Godhead was veiled from earthly sight by that mantle of Flesh and Blood Which, together with a Human Soul, He assumed in time. Certainly great servants of God have been said to see Him even in this life. Thus Job: "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee."[1] Thus David: "As for me, I shall behold Thy Presence in righteousness."[2] Thus Isaiah "beheld," while the glory of the Lord filled the Temple.[3] Thus St. John, when he saw the Risen Saviour in His glory, fell at His Feet as dead.[4] These are either preternatural anticipations of the future life vouchsafed to exceptionally good men, or they are, as with Job, cases in which men are said to see God only in a relative sense. Sight does not mean anything spiritual which corresponds fully to the action of the bodily eye, but only a much higher degree of perception than had been possible in a lower spiritual state. Of the children of men in this mortal state, the rule holds good that no one hath seen God at any time.[5]

But after death there will be a change. It is said of our Lord's glorified Manhood, united as It is for ever to the Person of the Eternal Son, that "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him."[6] Even the lost will then

[1] Job xlii. 5. [2] Ps. xvii. 16. [3] Isa. vi. 1.
[4] Rev. i. 17. [5] St. John i. 18. [6] Rev. i. 7.

understand much more of what God is to the universe and to themselves, although they are for ever excluded from the direct Vision of God. And they, too, will surely see God, who are waiting for the full glories of the sight to be vouchsafed to them after an intermediate time of discipline and training in the state which Scripture calls paradise. The spirit of man, we cannot doubt, will be much more conscious of the spirits around it, and of the Father of spirits, than was possible while it was encased in the body. God will no longer be to it a mere abstraction, a First Cause, a First Intelligence, a Supreme Morality, the Absolute, the Self-Existent, the Unconditioned Being. He will no longer reveal Himself to the strained tension of human thought, as one by one His Attributes are weighed, and balanced, and reconciled, and apportioned, after such poor fashion and measure as is possible for the finite mind when dealing with the Infinite. None of us will any more play with phrases about Him to which nothing is felt to correspond in thought or fact. He will be there, before us. We shall see Him as He is.[1] His vast illimitable Life will present itself to the apprehension of our spirits as a clearly consistent whole; not as a complex problem to be painfully mastered by the effort of our understandings, but as a present, living, encompassing

[1] 1 St. John iii. 2.

Being, Who inflicts Himself on the very sight of His adoring creatures. What will that first apprehension of God, under the new conditions of the other life, be? There are trustworthy accounts of men who have been utterly overcome at the first sight of a fellow-creature with whose name and work they had for long years associated great wisdom, or goodness, or ability; the first sight of the earthly Jerusalem has endowed more than one traveller with a perfectly new experience in the life of thought and feeling. What must not be the first direct sight of God, the Source of all beauty, of all wisdom, of all power, when the eye opens upon Him after death! "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty,"[1] were words of warning as well as words of promise. What will it not be to see Him in those first few moments—God, the Eternal Love, God, the consuming Fire[2]—as we shall see Him in the first five minutes after death!

III

Once more; at our entrance on another world we shall know our old selves as never before. The past will lie spread out before us, and we shall take a comprehensive survey of it. Each man's life will be displayed to him as a river, which he traces

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 17. [2] Heb. xii. 29.

from its source in a distant mountain till it mingles with the distant ocean. The course of that river lies, sometimes through dark forests which hide it from view, sometimes through sands or marshes in which it seems to lose itself. Here it forces a passage angrily between precipitous rocks, there it glides gently through meadows which it makes green and fertile. At one while it might seem to be turning backwards out of pure caprice; at another to be parting, like a gay spendthrift, with half its volume of waters; while later on it receives contributory streams that restore its strength; and so it passes on, till the ebb and flow of the tides upon its bank tells that the end is near. What will not the retrospect be when, after death, we survey, for the first time, as with a bird's-eye view, the whole long range—the strange vicissitudes, the loss and gain, as we deem it, the failures and the triumphs of our earthly existence; when we measure it, as never before, in its completeness, now that it is at last over!

This, indeed, is the characteristic of the survey after death, that it will be complete.

> "There no shade can last,
> In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
> But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
> The eternal landscape of the past."

That survey of life which is made by the dying is less than complete; it cannot include the closing

scene of all. While there is life, there is room for recovery, and the hours which remain may be very different from those which have preceded.

It may be thought that to review life will take as long a time as to live it; but this notion betrays a very imperfect idea of the resource and capacity of the human soul. Under the pressure of great feeling, the soul lives with a rapidity and intensity which disturb all its usual relations to time; witness the reports which those who have nearly lost their lives by drowning have made of their mental experiences. It once happened to me to assist at the recovery of a man who nearly forfeited life while bathing. He had sunk the last time, and there was difficulty in getting him to land, and when he was landed, still greater difficulty in restoring him. Happily there was skilled assistance at hand. And so presently my friend recovered, not without much distress, first one and then another of the sensations and faculties of his bodily life. In describing his experience of what must have been the whole conscious side of the act of dying by drowning, he said that the time had seemed to him of very great duration; he had lost his standard of the worth of time. He had lived his whole past life over again; he had not epitomised it; he had repeated it, as it seemed to him, in detail and with the greatest deliberation. He had great difficulty in understanding that he

had only been in the water for a few minutes. During these intenser moments of existence the life of the soul has no sort of relation to what we call time.

Yes! in entering another world we shall know what we have been in the past as never before; but we shall know also what we are. The soul, divested of the body, will see itself as never before; and it may be that it will see disfigurements and ulcers which the body, like a beautiful robe, had hitherto shrouded from the sight, and which are revealed in this life only by the shock of a great sorrow or of a great fall. There is a notion abroad —a notion which is welcomed because, whether true or not, it is very comfortable—that the soul will be so changed by death as to lose the disfigurements which it may have contracted through life; that the death-agony is a furnace, by being plunged into which the soul will burn out its stains; or that death involves such a shock as to break the continuity of our moral condition, though not of existence itself; and thus that, in changing worlds, we shall change our characters, and that moral evil will be buried with the body in the grave, while the soul escapes, purified by separation from its grosser companion, to the regions of holiness and peace.

Surely, brethren, this is an illusion which will not stand the test—we need not for the moment

say of Christian truth, but—of reasonable reflection. It is a contradiction to all that we know about the character and mind of man, in which nothing is more remarkable than the intimate and enduring connection which subsists between its successive states or stages of development. Every one of us here present is now exactly what his past life has made him. Our present thoughts, feelings, mental habits, good and bad, are the effects of what we have done or left undone, of cherished impressions, of passions indulged or repressed, of pursuits vigorously embraced or willingly abandoned. And as our past mental and spiritual history has made us what we are, so we are at this very moment making ourselves what we shall be. I do not forget that intervention of a higher force which we call "grace," and by which the direction of a life may be suddenly changed, as in St. Paul's case at his conversion; although these great changes are often prepared for by a long preceding process, and are not so sudden as they seem. But we are speaking of the rule, and not of the exception. The rule is that men are in each stage of their existence what with or without God's supernatural grace they have made themselves in the preceding stages; and there is no reasonable ground for thinking that at death the influences of a whole lifetime will cease to operate upon character, and that, whatever those influences may have been,

the soul will be purified by the shock of death. Why, I ask, should death have any such result? What is there in death to bring it about? Death is the dissolution of the bodily frame; of the limbs and organs through which the soul now acts. These organs are, no doubt, very closely connected with the soul, which strikes its roots into them and acts through them. But, although closely connected with the soul, they are distinct from it: thought, conscience, affection, will, are quite independent of the organs which are dissolved by death. And it is impossible to see why the soul should put on a new character simply because it lays aside for awhile the instrument which it has employed during a term of years, any more than why a painter's right hand should forget its cunning because he has sold his easel, or why a murderer in fact should cease to be a murderer at heart because he has lost his dagger and cannot afford to replace it. True, at death, the ear, the eye, the hands, perish. But when they are destroyed in this life by an accident, does character change with them? The indulgence of the purely animal appetite may depend on the healthy condition of the organ; but the mental condition which permits, if it does not dictate, the indulgence remains unaffected. Principles of right action or their opposites outlive the faculties, as they outlive the opportunities for asserting themselves in act.

The habit of thieving is not renounced because the right hand has been cut off; nor are sensual dispositions because the body is prostrate through illness; nor is evil curiosity because the eye is dim and the ear deaf. And when all the instruments through which in this life the soul has expressed itself, and which collectively make up the body, are laid aside by the emphatic act of death, the soul itself, and all its characteristic thought and affections, will remain unaffected, since its life is independent of its bodily envelope as is the body's life of the clothes which we wear.

One Being there is Who knows us now, Who knows us perfectly, Who has always known us. When we die we shall for the first time know ourselves, even as also we are known. We shall not have to await the Judge's sentence; we shall read it at a glance, whatever it be, in this new apprehension of what we are.

It may help us, then, this Advent to think from time to time of what will be our condition in the first five minutes after death. Like death itself, the solemnities which follow it must come to all of us. We know not when, or where, or how we shall enter on it; this only we know—that come it must. Those first five minutes, that first awakening to a new existence, with its infinite possibilities, will only be tolerable if we have indeed, with the

hands of faith and love, laid hold on the Hope set before us,[1] in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; Who for us men and for our salvation took flesh, and was crucified, and rose from death, and ascended into heaven, and has pleaded incessantly at the right hand of the Father for us, the weak and erring children of the Fall. Without Him, a knowledge of that new world, of its infinite and awful Master, still more of ourselves as we really are, will indeed be terrifying. With Him, we may trust that such knowledge will be more than bearable; we may think calmly even of that tremendous experience, if He, the Eternal God, is indeed our Refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms.[2]

[1] Heb. vi. 18. [2] Deut. xxxiii. 27.

SERMON V

THE HUMILIATION OF THE ETERNAL SON

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—PHIL. ii. 5-8.

IN no passage of his writings does St. Paul carry us more into the heights and depths of Christian doctrine than in these words. Yet his object is a moral and practical one. Human nature was, under the eyes of the Apostles, and within the Church, what it is now within the Church and under our eyes. Christian Philippi was distracted by divisions, not of a doctrinal or theological, but of a social and personal character. One feud, in particular, there was between two ladies of consideration, Euodias and Syntyche, which the Apostle

was particularly anxious to heal;[1] but it was probably only one feud among many. Small as it was, the church of Philippi already contained within its borders representatives of each of the three great divisions in race of the Roman world. The purple-dealer from Thyatira;[2] the slave-girl, who was a Macedonian, and apparently born on the spot, and who was, on account of her powers of divination, so profitable a possession to her owner;[3] the Roman colonist, who had charge of the public prison[4]—all became converts to the faith. Here we have an important branch of commerce represented; there the vast numbers of people, who in very various grades made their livelihood in official positions under government, while the divining-girl was a member of that vast and unhappy class to whom the Gospel brought more relief than to any other—in whose persons the rights of human nature were as completely ignored as if they had been altogether extinguished: the slave population of the Empire. He Who represented humanity as a whole spoke through His messengers to every class in the great human family; since "there was to be neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but all were one in Christ Jesus."[5]

And yet, human nature being what it is, this

[1] Phil. iv. 2. [2] Acts xvi. 14, 15. [3] *Ib.* 16–18.
[4] Acts xvi. 25–34. [5] Col. iii. 11.

very diversity of elements within the small community which believed on and worshipped Jesus Christ at Philippi, was likely, at least occasionally, to foster disagreements: the serpent of the old Pagan pride in human nature had been scotched rather than killed. Jealousies which were natural, and even admirable, in heathen eyes, were intolerable in Christendom, kneeling beneath the Redeemer's Cross. St. Paul insists upon the duties of social unity. He begs the Philippian Christians to "be steadfast in one spirit," [1] to "strive together with one mind for the faith of the Gospel," [2] to "do nothing through strife or vain-glory." [3]

For himself, he protests he had no partialities to indulge: he prays to God for all; he thanks God for graces bestowed on them all; he has bright hopes and anticipations about them all; they are *all* of them, he says, his companions in grace; his companions—though severed by seas and countries—in suffering; he yearns after them all—it is a most beautiful and suggestive expression —in the Heart of Jesus Christ.[4]

It is to the Incarnation and Cross of Jesus Christ that St. Paul points in order to justify his advice and to explain his meaning. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What mind? That question can only be answered by

[1] Phil. i. 27.
[2] *Ib.* i. 27.
[3] *Ib.* ii. 3.
[4] *Ib.* i. 3–8.

a somewhat close examination of the passage before us.

I

1. In looking into these words we observe, first of all, that St. Paul clearly asserts Jesus Christ to have existed before His Birth into the world. You and I, my brethren, it is unnecessary to say, had no existence before our natural birth; our immaterial nature is no older than our bodily nature; it was brought into existence contemporaneously with our bodies, by a special act of God's creative power. Jesus Christ too had a Human Soul, which was created contemporaneously with His Human Body; but before He had either the body or soul of man, He already existed. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, existing (so it should be rendered) in the form of God." The structure of the language here makes it certain that the Apostle is speaking of a point of time, not merely earlier than that at which our Lord commenced His ministry, but altogether antecedent to His taking human nature on Him. Being in the "form" of God. What is here meant by "form"? The word which is here translated "form,"[1] when applied to objects of sense, means all those sensible qualities which strike the eye of

[1] μορφή.

an observer, and so lead us to see that a thing is what it is. Our English word "form" is mainly restricted in its application to objects of sense, so that we know at once what is meant by the "form" of a man or of a public building. But the Greek word was applied quite commonly to immaterial objects, in which there was nothing to strike the bodily eye; the Greeks spoke of the "form" of an abstract idea just as naturally as we speak of the "form" of a house; and thus, the original drift of the word being exactly retained when it is applied to an abstract idea, the "collective qualities" of the idea which is before the mind's eye of the speaker are termed the "form" of that idea. Thus the "form" of justice would mean those qualities and capacities in man which go to make up the complete idea of justice. God, we know, is a Pure Spirit, without body or parts,—without any qualities that address themselves to sense,—the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible.[1] The "Form" of God would have meant, in St. Paul's mouth and St. Paul's thought, all those attributes which belong to the Reality and Perfection of the One Supreme Self-existent Being. By saying then that Jesus Christ existed in the Form of God, before "He took on Him the form of a slave," St. Paul would have been understood by any one who read him in his own language to

[1] 1 Tim. i. 17.

mean that, when as yet Christ had no human body or human soul, He was properly and literally God, because He existed in the "Form," and so possessed all the proper attributes, of God.

2. St. Paul goes on to say that being God, Christ Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This sentence would be more closely and clearly rendered, Christ "did not look on His equality with God as a prize to be jealously set store by." Men who are new to great positions are apt to think more of them than those who have always enjoyed them; a crown sits more naturally on hereditary monarchs than on soldiers or statesmen who have forced their way up the steps to the throne; and some thought of this kind, derived from the things of earth, colours the Apostle's language in describing by contrast those mysteries of heaven. Christ, Who was God from everlasting, laid no stress on this His Eternal Greatness: He made Himself of no reputation, or rather He emptied Himself (that is the exact word) of His Divine prerogatives or glory. Of His Divine Nature He could not divest Himself; but He could shroud It altogether from the eyes of His creatures: He could become a "worm, and no man, a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people."[1]

3. Of this self-humiliation St. Paul traces three

[1] Ps. xxii. 6.

distinct stages. The first consists in Christ's taking on Him the form—that is, here as before, the essential qualities which make up the reality—of a servant or slave. By this expression St. Paul means human nature. Without ceasing to be what He was, what He could not but be, He wrapped around Himself a created form, through which He would hold converse with men, in which He would suffer, in which He would die.

"The form of a servant." Service is the true business of human nature; man, as such, is God's slave. There are created natures higher than our own—who, like ourselves, are bound to yield a free service to their Maker, and who, unlike ourselves, yield it perfectly—Intelligences far vaster and stronger than any among the sons of men; Hearts burning with the fire of a love which, in its purity and its glow, surpasses anything that man can feel; Wills which in their freedom and their determination are more majestic than any which rules among the sons of men. Cherubim and Seraphim, Angels and Archangels, Thrones, Virtues, Dominions, Powers, Principalities—Christ surveyed them all, and passed them all by: He refused the elder born, and the nobler, the stronger of creation, and chose the younger, and the meaner, and the weaker. He took not on Him, St. Paul says, angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.[1] He was made

[1] Heb. ii. 16.

Man. By taking our nature upon Him, Christ deigned to forfeit His liberty of action: He placed Himself under restraints and obligations; He entered into human society, and at that end of it where obedience to the will of others is the law which all must obey. "Even Christ pleased not Himself:"[1] the Master of all became the slave of all.

The second stage of this humiliation is that Christ did not merely take human nature on Him: He became obedient to death. St. Paul here implies that it might have been otherwise; that Christ might conceivably have taken on Him a human form, and have ascended into heaven in it, without dying on the Cross or rising from the grave. Death is the penalty of sin;[2] it is the brand of physical evil set upon the universal presence of moral evil. How then should the Sinless One die? St. Paul implies that He was not subject to the law of death; and that He submitted to it, after becoming Man, by a distinct effort of His Free Will. "He became obedient unto death." This was indeed, it is distinctly stated as a matter of fact, His object in becoming Incarnate:—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death

[1] Rom. xv. 3.

[2] *Ib.* v. 12; vi. 23; St. James i. 15.

He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."[1] It was for our sakes, then, that He died: we die because we cannot help it: "it is appointed unto all men once to die."

Death is a tyrant who sooner or later claims the homage of all of us: Christ alone might have defied him, yet He freely submitted to his sway. As He Himself said: "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."[2]

The third stage in this humiliation is that when all modes of death were open to Him, He chose that which would bring with it the greatest share of pain and shame. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The cross was the death of the slaves and malefactors. St. Paul himself no doubt reflected that in this he could not, if he would, rival the humiliation of his Master, as he could not, much more, rival his Master's glories. St. Paul knew that, as a Roman freeman, he would be beheaded if condemned to die. Upon this death upon the cross the Jewish law, as St. Paul reminded the Galatians, utters a curse;[3] and that Christ should thus have died seemed to present to each section of the ancient

[1] Heb. ii. 14, 15. [2] St. John x. 18. [3] Gal. iii. 13.

Eastern world especial difficulties. Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.[1] And yet Christ "endured the cross, despising the shame."[2] He was bent upon drinking to the dregs the cup of self-humiliation; and God does not do what He does by halves: He is as Infinite in His condescensions as He is in His Majesty. He laid not stress on His Divine prerogatives. If He willed to die, why should He not embrace death in all the intensity of the idea, surrounded by everything that could protract the inevitable suffering and enhance the inevitable humiliation? If He willed to become Incarnate at all, why should He exempt Himself from any conditions of creaturely existence? why not in all things be made like unto His brethren,[3] sin only except? While on the cross of shame He endures "the sharpness of death," He is only completing that emptying Himself of His Glory which began when, "taking upon Himself to deliver man, He did not abhor the Virgin's womb."[4]

Thus, as we read the passage over, we see the successive stages of the humiliation of the Eternal Son. Existing in the real Nature of God, He set not store upon His Equality with God, but emptied Himself of His Glory by taking on Him the real nature of a slave, and being made in the likeness

[1] 1 Cor. i. 23.
[2] Heb. xii. 2.
[3] *Ib.* ii. 17.
[4] *Te Deum Laudamus.*

of man—that is the first step in the descent—and being found in outward appearance as a man He humbled Himself among men, and became obedient unto death—that is the second; but when all forms of death were open to Him He chose to die in the manner which was most full of ignominy in the eyes of men—He became obedient to the death of the Cross—that is the third.

II

Why may we suppose, my brethren, that God, by His providence acting in His Church, places before our eyes this most suggestive passage of Holy Scripture on this particular Sunday?[1] We may, I think, answer that question without much difficulty.

1. We stand to-day on the threshold of the Great Week, which in the thought of a well-instructed Christian, whose heart is in its right place, is beyond all comparison the most solemn week in the whole year. It is the Holy Week, so called because it is consecrated to the particular consideration of our Lord's Sufferings and Death. Day by day in the Gospels, which are specially appointed, and in the Proper Lessons, the whole story of Christ's bitter and tragical Passion is

[1] Phil. ii. 5–11 forms the *Epistle* for the "Sunday next before Easter."

unfolded step by step before our eyes, first in the language of one Evangelist, then in that of another, until every recorded incident has been placed before us. Now, if we are to profit by this most solemn and instructive Narrative, it is of the first importance that we should answer clearly to ourselves this primary question: "Who is the Sufferer?" and that we should keep the answer well in the forefront of our thoughts throughout the week. Even in everyday history we look upon exactly the same misfortunes in the case of different persons with very different eyes when we take into account the moral excellence or even the personal rank of the sufferers. Of the many persons in high rank who had their heads cut off in the Tudor period of English history, people like Sir Thomas More and Lady Jane Grey attract particular interest on account of the lustre of sincerity and goodness which attaches to their characters. Of the many innocent victims of the first French Revolution, Louis XVI. and his queen, Marie Antoinette, will always command a predominant share of sympathy and interest, from the mere fact that each was born of a race of kings, born to an inheritance of luxury and splendour which contrasts so tragically with the last hours and scenes in the prison and on the public scaffold. It will be said, perhaps, that, so far as suffering goes, a peasant may suffer as acutely as a king,

and that one man's life is as good as the life of another. True. But, for all that, it is felt that the destiny to which the king was born of itself makes his tragical end more tragical than it could else have been; if the amount of physical agony be no greater than in the case of the peasant, at least there is room for a greater degree of mental agony. When we apply this principle to our Lord, and in the light of the great doctrine which St. Paul teaches the Philippians in the text about Christ's Person, how new and awful a meaning does it give to the whole story of our Lord's Betrayal and Trial,—of the insults, humiliations, and sufferings to which He was subjected,—of the various particulars of His Death upon the Cross! Had He been merely man, the story of His Death would have roused deep human fellow-feelings within us; it is said on one occasion to have moved a multitude of heathen savages to tears by the mere force of its pathetic beauty. What they felt was the innocence of the Sufferer; that He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; that when He was reviled He reviled not again;[1] that the blood which He shed was precious, as being that, as St. Peter says, of a Lamb without blemish and immaculate.[2] Doubtless the sinless innocence of Christ does pour a flood of moral meaning on the history of His Death. If He had

[1] 1 St. Pet. ii. 22, 23. [2] *Ib.* i. 19.

no sins to expiate He could not have died for Himself; and we, as we look into our guilty consciences, can only exclaim with the Apostle, that "such an High Priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."[1] But that which gives to the Passion and Death of our Lord its real value is the fact that the Sufferer is more than man; that, although He suffers in and through a created nature, He is Personally God. This fact was part of that hidden wisdom or philosophy of which St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, when he tells them that "if the princes of this world had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."[2] This fact is the key-note to a true Christian understanding of the story of the Passion; at each step the Christian asks himself, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?"[3] Who is this betrayed, insulted, beaten, bound, reviled One? Who is this arrayed as a mock monarch, with fancy robe and fancy sceptre—Whose Brow is pressed with that crown of thorns—Whose Shoulders are laden with that sharp and heavy cross? Whom do they buffet—upon Whose Face do they spit—into Whose Hands do they drive the nails—to Whose parched Mouth do they lift the hyssop? St. Paul answers that question as the centurion answered it beneath the cross: it was not one of the sons of men upon

[1] Heb. vii. 26. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 8. [3] Isa. lxiii. 1.

whom His fellows were thus venting their scorn and hate; it was He Who, "existing in the true nature or form of God, did not set store by His equality with God, but emptied Himself of His Divine prerogatives, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

And it is this consideration which enables us to enter into all that the Apostles, and especially St. Paul, teach us as to the effects of the Death of Jesus Christ. Their language seems very exaggerated to those who believe Him to have been only man, and such persons consistently endeavour to empty it of its force by resolving it all into metaphor. There can be no reason for supposing that the death of any mere man would have had the effects which the Apostle attribute to the Death of Jesus Christ. They tell us that Jesus dying is a propitiation for our sins;[1] that He is our redemption from sin;[2] that by His Blood we who were far off were made nigh to God;[3] that His Blood cleanseth from all sin.[4] They thus teach us that we are, apart from Christ, exiles from our Father's home, captives who have to be brought back from bondage, sinners whose guilt must be expiated before the justice of God; and that this restoration, this reconciliation, this expiation, is the work of

[1] Rom. iii. 25; 1 St. John ii. 2. [2] Col. i. 14; Heb. ix. 15.
[3] Eph. ii. 13–16; 2 Cor. v. 18. [4] 1 St. John i. 7.

our Lord and Saviour, more particularly in His Death.

If it be asked why His Death should have such effects, there are two questions to be separately considered. First, Why should His Death affect *us* at all? That a great act of self-sacrifice should be a blessing to a man himself, to those immediately in contact with him who have had opportunities of witnessing it, this we can understand. But how is its effect to be transferred to other persons, belonging to distant countries and distant times? The answer is that our Lord stands to the whole human race in the position of its Representative. We know what is meant by a representative man; a man who represents a country, a class, a line of thought, a political or social aspiration. England abounds in representative men in this lower sense of the term. But Christ represents human nature, as Adam represented it; He is, according to St. Paul, the Second Adam,[1] Who stands out from among all other members of the human family, as occupying a position corresponding to that of the first Adam,—a position which gives His Personality a relationship to all. In the first Adam the whole human family lived by inclusion; and his acts compromised all his descendants by the same law as that which at the present day makes the good or bad character of a father, or a father's bodily

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 45.

constitution, rendered healthy by sober living, or enfeebled by vice, as the case may be, the inheritance of his child. Between us and the first Adam the connection is natural and necessary: between us and the Second Adam it depends upon our being brought into real contact with Him by faith and love on our part, by the grace which comes from Him through the Sacrament of our New Birth and otherwise, on His. We have, in short, to claim from Him His representative relationship, and what it involves; but when this claim has been made, the acts of Christ become our acts, the sufferings of Christ our sufferings, the self-sacrifice of Christ ours. Thus He bears our sins in His own Body on the tree;[1] thus as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One many were made righteous;[2] thus "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ" may "all be made alive."[3]

Christ's Death then does affect us,—not by any arbitrary or capricious arrangement, but because He took on Himself that human nature in which we all claim a share. But what is it that gives His Death its power and significance? It is that He Who dies is more than man. The reason which makes the history of the Passion so interesting and so awful is the same reason which makes its effects of such unspeakable significance. It is

[1] 1 St. Pet. ii. 24. [2] Rom. v. 19. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

the "priceless worth of the person of the Son of God"—to use Hooker's language—"which gives such force and effect to all that He does and suffers."[1] What that force and effect would be we could not guess beforehand without a revelation from Heaven. We could only be sure of this, that the Death as well as the Life of such an One as Jesus Christ must, from the nature of the case, be very different, in point of spiritual result, from that of any mere man. The Apostles tell us in what that difference consists, when they enumerate the several elements and consequences of what we call the Atonement; when they tell us that by it God and man are reconciled, that a propitiation from man's sin is offered to God, that man is brought back from captivity in the realm of death. The wonder is—if there be room for wonder—not that so much follows from such a cause, but that, so far as we are told, so little follows from it.

Doubtless the Passion of the Son of God has had results in spheres of being of which we know nothing, and of which, since nothing has been told us, it would not profit us to know. But it is natural to ask with St. Paul, "If God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"[2] The premiss is more than equal to

[1] *Eccl. Pol.* v. 52, 3. [2] Rom. viii. 32.

sustain any conclusion which the Apostles actually draw from it.

2. But besides this, it is well that we should take to heart the particular lesson which St. Paul draws for the benefit of the Philippians from the consideration of the Incarnation and Passion of the Son of God. It is a lesson which is as valuable to us as members of civil society as it is valuable to members of the Church of Christ. What is the main source of the dangers which threaten the wellbeing of civil society from very opposite directions? It is the assertion of individual self-interest, real or supposed, pushed to a point at which it becomes incompatible with the interests of the community. The real enemy of human society is individual self-assertion,—intolerant of wealth, reputation, power, in others, — intolerant of any supremacy except the supremacy of self, of any glory except the glory of self, of any aggrandisement except the aggrandisement of self. This assertion becomes sometimes a despotism, which sacrifices the liberties of an entire nation to the supremacy of a single man; sometimes, as we see in that beautiful and hapless city across the Channel, at this moment[1] a revolutionary chaos, in which a thousand aspirants for power and wealth are talking of nothing more and thinking of nothing less than the real good of their country. And the

[1] April, 1871.

source of this mischief lies in a false ideal of human excellence; in the notion that it consists in self-assertion rather than in self-repression; in making the most of life for self, rather than in spending it for others. Now here St. Paul teaches us that Christ Incarnate and Crucified is the true model for Christians—for mankind. If He did not set store on glory which was rightfully, inalienably His, why should we? If He shrouded it, buried it away out of sight, lived amongst men as if it had no existence, took on Him the form of a servant, why should we do otherwise? If when He might have humbled Himself without suffering, if, when two roads of sacrifice were open to Him, He chose the most exacting and the most painful, does this say nothing to us? Surely, brethren, we see here, perhaps more clearly than in any other place of Holy Scripture, how closely the moral teaching of Christianity is bound up with its doctrine. As Watts says in his noble hymn—

> "When I survey the wondrous cross
> On which the Prince of Glory died,
> My chiefest gain I count but loss,
> And pour contempt on all my pride."

Humility is so beautiful in Christian eyes because Christ was humble: self-sacrifice—even to death—is so glorious, because He is its conspicuous Example. He has settled the question of what

high excellence in life really consists in, for all time: and it can never be re-opened. Pagans might admire self-assertion; the making the most of a position for personal and selfish ends; the clinging anxiously to the poor shreds of reputation, or wealth, or power which it may confer on a possessor. Yet they too knew that all this ended with the grave: and they could only bid men make the best of the fleeting hour, and shut their eyes to its inevitable close. Christ has taught us Christians a better way, not by precept merely, but by example. He has taught us that the true force and glory of our human life consists not in self-advertisement, but in self-repression; not in enjoyment, but in sacrifice of self. The principle which was to heal the divisions of the little Christian society at Philippi is the only principle which can save society, imperilled as it is in so many ways in the Europe of our day. All who have lived for others rather than for themselves in His Church,—all who have, at the call of duty, laid aside wealth, honour, credit, and embraced ignominy and suffering, have been true to Him—true to the spirit of His Incarnation and His Death, true to what St. Paul calls "the mind that was in Christ Jesus." And the true saviours of society are the men who care more for labour than for honour, more for doing good to others than for high place and name, more for the inner

peace which self-sacrifice brings with it than for the outward decorations which are the reward of self-assertion. Such there are in every generation; and they are in a line with, or rather they are pale reflections of the Saviour of the world. Still more certain is it that the Mind of Christ in saving us is the only mind which enables us individually to accept His salvation. St. Paul describes the Jews as "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, and so not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God."[1] The most fatal thing in religion, next to insincerity, is that confidence in self which makes much of what we are, and forgets what, by God's grace, we might have been,—which thinks much of the good opinion of friends and little of the accusing voice of conscience,—which is fully alive to personal excellencies, and blind to that vast mass of evil which the Holy God, and the pure beings who surround His throne, see in us. May He teach us, at least, to be true. The self-deceit which makes us think much of self is impossible when a man's eyes have been opened to see what God really Is in His Awful Sanctity: "Now mine eye seeth Thee," he cries, "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."[2] Only penitent and broken hearts have any rightful place at the foot of the Redeemer's Cross; but

[1] Rom. x. 3. [2] Job. xlii. 5, 6.

there is no reason why any or all of us should not, by God's grace, in this our brief day of life, and especially at this blessed season, learn true penitence and contrition. It is the moral rather than the intellectual eye which discerns the true majesty of the Humiliation of the Son of God; it is the man who has emptied himself of self-complacency who finds in the Redeemer, disfigured with wounds and robed in shame upon His Cross, "an hiding-place from the winds of life, and a covert from the tempest; and a river of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."[1]

[1] Isa. xxxii. 2.

SERMON VI

THE TRUE LIFE OF MAN

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."—ST. LUKE xii. 15.

THIS is an instance of our Lord's manner of taking occasion, when a particular incident comes before Him, to proclaim a truth of world-wide import. The truth is broader and deeper than is needed for the immediate purpose: but then, in the eyes of the Universal Teacher, the particular case is not only to be considered in itself; it furnishes an opportunity for proclaiming something that shall concern and interest the world. Our Lord had come to a pause in His public teaching, when it occurred to a Jew who was listening that a person of such influence and ascendency might possibly help him towards attaining a private and domestic object, which he had greatly at heart. This Jew was a younger son, who could not easily forgive his elder brother for enjoying a double share of their father's

estate. The elder brother, it is plain, was also one of our Lord's hearers, and likely to be, in whatever degree, attracted by Him; but, on the other hand, it may be taken for certain that he had no mind to part with any portion of his estate, or the appeal against him would not have been necessary. "Master," cried the younger man, "speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me."[1] Our Lord might, it is clear, have met this appeal by a direct discussion of its intrinsic merit. But in fact placing Himself at the point of view of the speaker, who could not yet know at all what He Himself really was, He asks what commission He could be supposed to hold for deciding such questions at all. "Man, who made Me a judge or divider over you?" And then, as if glancing at both the brothers—the elder, who held so tenaciously to his legal fortune, and the younger, who was so eager to share it—He rises into a higher atmosphere, and His words become at once instructive to all men and for all time. "Take heed," He said, "and beware of covetousness," for one reason among others, but especially for one—that covetousness involves a radical mistake as to the true meaning and nature of life: "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." He does not deny that something is needed to sustain physical life; but He has His

[1] St. Luke xii. 13.

eye upon the tendency to accumulate a great deal more, and to throw all the energy of thought and work into this accumulation. Man's life consists not, He says, in this kind of abundance, which is made up of things which he possesseth. If we could forget who the Speaker is, some of us might, at the first thought, be disposed to say that this is a truism. No doubt it is. So true it is, that it was a commonplace among the heathen. We may remember the lines in which even the light-hearted poet of the Augustan age tells how "neither house nor farm, nor store of brass and gold, can banish fever from the ailing body, or care from the mind."[1]

Understand life as you will, and the Sacred words correspond with everyday experience, that life is not anything external to man. Every invalid knows that his physical life consists not in the costly medicines or professional skill which he can command, but in the renewed vigour of his bodily frame and its vital functions. Every student knows that his mental life consists, not in the books on his shelves—not even in the thoughts of other men industriously copied into his note-books; but in the appropriation of these

[1] "Non domus aut fundus, non aeris acervus et auri
Aegroto domini deduxit corpore febres,
Non animo curas——"

Hor. 1 *Ep.* ii. 47.

treasures by his memory and his thinking faculty, in their being interwoven with and made a part of the texture and system of his mind. And every Christian knows, or should know, that his spiritual life consists, not in the possession of a Bible, or in the near neighbourhood of Churches and Sacraments, or of Christian friends, or of other religious opportunities, but in that which is "hid with Christ in God;"[1] in the incorporation with his inmost self of that Truth and Grace of which religious opportunities, the highest and the lowest, are but the channels. So obvious is this, that when it is denied that life—something always and essentially internal and personal—consists in that which is distinct from and independent of us, we are at first tempted, if not to ask, yet to think, "Who ever said that it did?" Yes, the saying is a truism. But there are truisms and truisms. There are truisms which are admitted to be such in the conduct as well as by the speech of men. And there are truisms which are never questioned in conversation, and which are rarely acted on. To insist on truisms of the former class is no doubt an impertinence; to insist on truisms of this latter kind again and again, and even with importunity, is by no means superfluous; and the saying of our Lord is undoubtedly a truism of this description. The distinction which He draws between what a

[1] Col. iii. 3.

man has and what he is, is as obvious, when stated, as it is commonly overlooked. The saying that life consists not in what we have but in what we are, is as true as the practice of making life consist not in what we are but in what we have, is common. Intellectually speaking, the world did not need these words of our Lord. Practically speaking, there is no one of His sayings which it could less dispense with. For just consider the two brothers. They both knew perfectly that what our Lord said was true. They had learnt the truth from their own Hebrew Scriptures, and yet they were acting as if it were an ascertained illusion. The determination to retain the larger share of the property, the determination to have it divided if possible, meant that in the practical judgment of both the brothers life did somehow consist in possessing property. All the energy and resolve with which we pursue that about which we feel most deeply was thrown into this question of retaining or dividing that bit of property. Each would have said, no doubt, that his life did not consist in possessing it. Each certainly acted as if it did.

Truism or truth, there is no mistake as to the importance which our Lord attached to what He then announced. He taught it in act as well as by word of mouth. Unlike ourselves, He could determine the circumstances in which He would

enter this world, and with which He would surround Himself in it. And what did He advisedly choose? A poor home, poor people for His Mother and Foster-father, poor men for His companions; the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His Head.[1] He would not accept consideration and position even from the poor: He would not be made a King or an umpire. And at last He gave Himself up to be stripped even of His poor garments and to die in agony on the Cross. "Ye know," said His Apostle in after years, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."[2] And the wealth which He thus earns for us is largely moral wealth; it lies above all else in making our life consist in something else than the things which we possess.

Certainly, judging from experience, it would seem that there is a constant tendency in our fallen nature to run counter to the truth which our Lord proclaims; to create, if we may so put it, a new centre of gravity in life, so that we come to act and speak and think more with reference to something that is altogether outside us than to the true centre of our existence. And this tendency is a result of that momentous event in

[1] St. Matt. viii. 20. [2] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

the earliest history of our race, which we term the Fall.

For in his fallen state, and so far as he is stripped of God's supernatural grace, man's solitary self is too thin and feeble a spirit to persist in independence of the outer world of matter; it exerts upon him evidently and always a fatal and all but resistless attraction; it attracts him through that side of his composite nature which belongs to it; it lures or draws or drags him down until his personal self, his spirit, is entangled in and detained by it; until, victim as he is of its ceaseless and subtle importunity, he has fallen, at first little by little, but in the end completely, under its sway,—under the empire of material nature. Of this fact the Pantheism of the ancient world, which was at the root of its idolatries, was an expression; it was an unconscious attempt, by way of afterthought, to make man's degradation respectable by decorating it with theory. And within the frontiers of Christendom, wherever the grace of Regeneration has been forfeited, the old attraction is at once felt; modern civilisation imposes on it some characteristic form; society takes the place of wild nature; and life, still practically made to consist in that which is external to man, is also made to consist in that which society prizes most.

Look at our great cities. For millions of human beings the face of nature scarcely exists; they live

in these vast centres of population, where man has traced his own ungraceful inscriptions over the fair handiwork of God; and the matter which they extract from the bowels of the earth or which they collect from its extremities, to wield, to mould, to refine, to analyse, to reproduce in a thousand disguises, seems, as they handle it, to thicken the mental air they breathe; to bury thought, imagination, affection, will, in its dull encompassing folds; to penetrate their immaterial being and impregnate it with qualities which might, if possible, even materialise thought; to make man, undying spirit that he is, forget his true value and his destiny, and think of himself as though some grains or nuggets of the matter around him were more precious than he. What wonder if, where little or no light from above illuminates these populations, so conducive by their varied industries to our material prosperity as a nation, but ministering to it so often at so vast a cost,—what wonder if there should be forgetfulness of that wherein man's true life consists: if, when labour is rewarded by wealth, that life should be sought in something altogether external; in the tangible products of his brains or of his hands; in the abundance of acres or houses or railway shares or other symbols of material wealth of which he may have succeeded in possessing himself!

It was for men of this temper, though living in

an agricultural district, that our Lord in His condescending mercy uttered the parable about the man whose fields brought forth plenteously, and who proposed to pull down his barns and build greater, and who whispered to his soul that he should take his ease, eat and drink and be merry for many a year to come, and to whom God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." [1]

An intellectual society is apt to congratulate itself on its freedom from the vulgar care for money which is characteristic of a manufacturing town; though it may perhaps be a question whether it is really justified in doing so. But a man who is careless about money for its own sake may still make his life consist in works of art or of literature. The true posture of his mind is to a certain extent disguised from his conscience, because books and pictures are associated with ideas rather than with the money which they will fetch in the market, so in making idols of them the owner may persuade himself that he is a purely intellectual or æsthetic enthusiast. But after all, they are just as much outside him as a heap of sovereigns, and he must part with them at death. What a pathetic description is that of Cardinal Mazarin, rousing himself from his dying bed at Vincennes to take a last look at the treasures which his long ascendency in

[1] St. Luke xii. 16–20.

the councils of the French Monarchy had enabled him to accumulate. When his nurses and doctors were away he rose from his couch, and with his tall figure, pale and wasted, closely wrapped in his fur-lined dressing-gown, he stole into the gallery; and the Count de Brienne, who reports the scene, hearing the shuffling sound of his slippers as he dragged his limbs feebly and wearily along, hid himself behind the curtains. As, in his extreme weakness, the Cardinal had to halt almost at each step, he feebly murmured, "I must leave all this." He crawled on, however, clinging, so as to support himself, first on one object and then on another, and as at each pause, exhausted by pain and weakness, he looked around the splendid room, he said again, with a deep sigh, "I must leave all this." Then, at last, he caught sight of Brienne: "Give me your hand," he said, "I am very weak and helpless, yet I like to walk, and I have something to do in the library." And then, leaning on the Count's arm, he again pointed to the pictures. "Look at that beautiful Correggio, and this Venus of Titian, and this incomparable Deluge of Antonio Caracci. Ah! my poor friend, I must leave all this. Good-bye, dear pictures, which I have loved so well!"[1]

No doubt the most obvious form of the mistake

[1] *Mémoires inédits de Louis-Henri de Loménie, Comte de Brienne* (Paris, 1828), ii. 114–117.

against which our Lord guards us is somewhat of this kind; and yet there are other things besides gold, and acres, and pictures, and books, much less tangible and palpable, yet purely external to man, in which he may make his life consist. Such is reputation; such is social, political, academical, ecclesiastical honour, as the case may be. Many a man, whose natural instincts are too refined to allow him to care keenly for property, is even passionately desirous of honour. Every society has its own standards and certificates of honour. All the expressions of it which meet the eye and which fall upon the ear—decorations, titles, ordered precedence, the delicate and scarcely-hinted compliment, the tone and posture of calculated and restrained deference—these we find everywhere in human life, and not less than elsewhere in the life of a University. The younger of us know the pleasure which is felt at the cheers which follow an athletic victory, or a conspicuous service rendered to the college boat on the river, or a brilliant speech in the Union, or upon the generous congratulations which are called out by expected or unexpected success in the schools. And others, whom years have taught to discipline and restrain the expression of feeling, are yet fully alive to the subtle fascinations of honour, when, perhaps, some post of authority or responsibility is offered them, or some notice taken of them in a very high

quarter, or some little work of theirs is favourably criticised in a German periodical, or some warmth of commendation from a living friend commonly chary of his words, and not given to compliments, is indirectly conveyed to them. We all know how largely we prize these things; it is well for us if we do not make our life consist in them; for such honour, in all its forms, is no part of our real selves; it is just as much external to us as the coat we wear on our back, or the shillings in our pocket,—very close to us for the time, but very easily separable, and very certain to be separated. Well for us indeed if we deserve it, even in part; if conscience does not whisper that in welcoming it we are taking that which is not our own; as, indeed, in one sense conscience must always remind us that there is in the last resort only One Being Who can deserve, as only One Being Who can confer, true honour.

> "When mortals praise thee, hide thine eyes,
> Nor to thy Master's wrong
> Take to thyself His crown and prize;
> Yet more in heart than tongue." [1]

And anyhow, of all earthly honour, as of wealth, it is true that a man "shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him." [2]

[1] *Lyra Innocentium*, iv. 3. [2] Ps. xlix. 17.

There is a kind of monument more than once still to be met with in our old English Cathedrals, which was meant to teach this truth in what would now be called a realistic way. Above, perhaps, lies the figure of a great Prelate, arrayed in his full pontificals, with cope, and mitre, and pastoral staff, possibly raising his right hand as if still in the act of benediction, and surrounded with all the symbols of his high order, and his spiritual and temporal jurisdiction, while carved angels support the broidered cushion on which he rests his head, and with his feet he treads upon the young lion and the dragon — the moral, or social, or political opponents of the Church's rule; and below this figure, so beautiful in form, so emblazoned with colour, there lies on a lower ledge another. It is a well-nigh naked corpse, emaciated almost to a skeleton, in which the ribs and joints are each articulated with a painfully literal exactness, while a worm is gnawing the vitals or protruding from the brain. Above is the Prelate still swathed and encrusted in the accumulated honours of high ecclesiastical position. Beneath is the man, lying as every man sooner or later must lie, stripped of all earthly decorations, in the nakedness and corruption of the grave. Do you say that such a conception belongs to the coarseness of mediæval art? Do not impair the force, it may be, of even unwelcome truth by an adjective conveying a

narrow and unwarranted judgment. No, that portraiture is not merely mediæval, whatever hands may first have fashioned it; it is Christian, it is human, it is true now, it will be to the end of time, it proclaims the eternal contrast between the honour which may surround us in life, deservedly or undeservedly, and the forfeiture of all honour that cometh not from God only,[1] which surely awaits us all in death. It is a vivid exhibition of one aspect of the truth, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

And there are others, nobler souls, surely, than these, whom honour charms not, still less wealth, but who are the devotees of knowledge. If they said out their whole heart they would say that a man's true life does consist in the knowledge which he possesseth. And they might be right if they meant, by the act of knowing, something more than apprehension by the understanding and retention by the memory; and if the Object of their knowledge were the Infinite and Everlasting God. For "this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."[2] But then this knowledge which is Eternal life is something different from that to which I referred just now; it is, according to the original Bible language, an adhesion of the whole being,—

[1] St. John v. 44. [2] *Ib.* xvii. 3.

of will and affections, no less than of the understanding,—to its Object. In our ordinary language, knowledge, we know, means much less than this; it means the apprehension by the understanding and reason of man, of those facts about himself and about the world around him which can be verified by observation, and which are practically useful in the conduct of life. This knowledge is sometimes called, I do not say with what reason, positive; it is triumphantly contrasted with the science of mind, and even with Divine Revelation; it is presented as solid, certain, practical; and an increasing number of minds in our day devote themselves to it with fresh enthusiasm. But it too is external to man. He apprehends it; he retains it for years; he carries it about with him; he dispenses it to others; it seems for a while to have made a home at the very centre of his being, and his memory fondles it, and his reason watches and dissects it, and his imagination decorates and dresses it up; but for all that it is not himself—it is outside his real self, and he will, one day, part company with it. Necessary truth, indeed, once ours, is, if we will, ours for ever. Such is the true knowledge of the Infinite and Eternal God; such, too, the knowledge, it may be, of truths which the constitution of our minds obliges us to recognise as necessary —as, for instance, the axioms and conclusions of mathematics, or first principles in morals—and

which, as they never can have been other than true, cannot have been something eternally independent of Him Who alone is Eternal Truth, and must therefore represent, in ways which we may be allowed to understand hereafter, elements of His Eternal Being. But the greater part of what we call knowledge is very different: it is as variable, contingent, evanescent, as are its objects; and this knowledge, as the Apostle says, shall vanish away;[1] we shall put it off as the mere dressing-gown of the soul when we lie down to die.

Nay, of this we have warnings, before we reach the end, in the change and decay of the mental powers. Some of us have perhaps known what it is to witness that solemn and mysterious judgment or dispensation of God, when a mind, richly endowed with faculties and resources, and stored with the accumulated knowledge of a lifetime, suddenly breaks down; discovers, as in a moment, that its well-tried machinery is not entirely at command; suspects that it no longer sees everything as it is, and that all is somehow distorted and awry, and so passes through painful alternations of reason and unreason,—just enough of the one to take the measure of the tragic presence of the other. And then, little by little, the internal survey of mental wealth, and the power of marshalling and administering it, becomes less and less distinct,

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

and the inner chasms open more widely, and the darkness thickens around until, as far as this world is concerned, all has closed in night.

No, brethren, a man's life consisteth not in that which he possesseth. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." [1] Knowledge, honour, wealth, these pass: and man's truest life consists not in what he has but in what he is, in the relation or attitude of his will towards the Being who is the Author and the Last End of his existence. This relation, be assured, does not change, either for good or evil, as we pass through the gate of death. If the will be self-warped, turned away from the Face of Eternal Righteousness, what it is, it will remain enduringly, and no store of material wealth, or earthly honour, or mental accomplishments can relieve this central and fatal deficiency. If, through the Redemption and Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has bought the inmost self of man back from slavery by His Precious Blood, and has given it directness and vigour by acting on it through His Spirit and His Sacraments,—if man's will has been made thus true in its aim, and free, and pliant, and vigorous in its upward movement; be sure that this, too, is a thing which lasts: this is life.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

Five years before he left us, one who has since his death been much in men's minds, especially within these walls, had an illness which was of a very critical character.[1] For some days he said nothing, and he was supposed to be quite unconscious. After his recovery he referred, one day, to this, the presumably unconscious, part of his illness. "People thought," he said, "that I was unconscious, but the fact was, that although I could not speak I heard all that went on in the room, and I was well occupied." To the question, "What were you doing?" he answered, "By God's mercy, I could remember the Epistle for the fourth Sunday in Advent, out of the Philippians, which begins, 'Rejoice in the Lord alway.' This I made a framework for prayer; saying the Lord's Prayer two or three times between each clause, and so dwelling on the several relations of each clause to each petition in the Lord's Prayer." How he did this he explained at some length, and then added, "It lasted me, I should think, four or five hours." To the question, "What did you do after that?" he answered, "I began it over again. I was very happy: and, had it been God's will, did not wish to get better."

Yes, assuredly, a man's life does not consist in

[1] The Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford (where this sermon was preached).

the outward things which he possesseth. Let us, in conclusion, endeavour to apply this truth to one or two parts in detail.

1. Surely it should shape and control our notions of progress, civilisation, improvement. What do men really mean, nine times out of ten, when they employ these fascinating and attractive terms? Do they not too often mean only something that takes place in that which is outside man, instead of in man's real self, the seat and centre of his life? Take an instance. I happen to go down into a country neighbourhood and meet a person who says that everything is looking up: that the progress and improvement are quite astonishing. I ask for an explanation, and he proceeds to say that a new railway has just been opened; that they are now only six hours from London; that there are now two posts in the day; that the farms are well let; that the squire has been rebuilding his cottages on an improved model; that it is a great advantage to have the telegraph, and a Post-office Savings-bank. Do I say that these things are without their value, or other than great blessings which God, in His Providence, has bestowed? Certainly not: but the question is whether they are the decisive tests of real improvement, in the life of a being like man. If man be what the Christian Revelation tells us he is,—a spirit with a material form attached to him, a spirit on

probation here for a short space of years, and with an eternity before him,—how can that be any true improvement in a town or country neighbourhood which does not take account of this fundamental fact in his existence?

Surely there are many other questions to be asked and answered before our Lord Jesus Christ would have said that that neighbourhood was improved. What are the statistics of crime? what the relations of masters and servants, of parents and children? how many people say any prayers? what is the condition of the schools? what is taught in them about another life, and how, and by whom? what is the public honour paid to God in His Church or in the use of His Sacraments? what, so far as we can know, are the average dispositions of the dying? These questions go more to the root of the matter; they prove the claim to real improvement; since the true life of a neighbourhood, as of a man, consists in something else than the abundance of its material advantages, however considerable they may be.

2. Again, look at our too common way of estimating the prosperity of a Church. We count up its sacred buildings; we calculate the amount of its fixed or variable income; we survey and value the social consideration, or political weight accorded to its ministers; we regard them as members of a "profession," to be measured by

the same standards of failure or success as any other,—as officers in the army or members of the bar. For us, too often, the Church is of the earth earthy, because we see in it nothing else; we are so engrossed in the study of its outer husk that we have no eye for realities within. Yet a Church is nothing, if it be not a congregation or home of souls; and the condition of these souls, their faith, their hope, their love, their repentance, their power over the insurgent forces within and the assailing forces without them, their ability to maintain true communion with the Invisible Source of life, is the point really worth thinking of. The Church, whose life, in the judgment of her members, consisteth in the abundance of outward things which she possesseth, is in fair way to lose them. It was not so when Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee;" [1] it will not be so when the Bride of the Immaculate Lamb is finally summoned to the Eternal Presence-Chamber.

3. Once more, what is the view we individually take, of whatever God may have intrusted us with, for a few brief years, in the way of capital and income? Do we let our heart go out into it, thinking only or chiefly of how we can increase its amount? or do we bear in mind that it is utterly outside our real selves, that we dispose of it for a very short time, and shall have to answer

[1] Acts iii. 6.

for our way of doing so? In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord insists on the unselfish and sincere discharge of the three leading duties of Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting;[1] and of these, assuredly, the first is not the least. Only when we remember that a man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth, shall we know how to sit easily to property and to handle it conscientiously. There are, perhaps, some young men among my hearers who a few years hence will dispose of considerable fortunes. Depend on it, brethren, that much even here depends—nothing, perhaps, less than the safety of the social structure in this country—on the way in which you will understand your responsibilities. The strength of communistic theories, here and everywhere else, consists, not in any solid truth on which they rest, since generally they do but cover a singular background of tangled fallacies, but in the failure of so many among the wealthier classes to understand the true relations of property to life. Lent is a time for getting rid of illusions, and of this master-illusion among the rest, that there is any value whatever in property apart from the good use which we can make of it. The communism of the younger brother in the Gospel, and the resolute selfishness of the elder are equally persistent and equally deplorable. The real question for all of us is, What shall we

[1] St. Matt. vi. 1–18.

hereafter desire to have felt about that which God has withheld? what shall we desire to have done with that which by His gift we have, be it much or little? what shall we desire ourselves to be, when we know that the end of life is close upon us? Most assuredly that question is vital: it cannot be pondered too often or too carefully; and in answering it let us never forget that man's life—that in him which will not perish at death—"consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

SERMON VII

THE POWER OF RECOVERY

"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."—Ps. cxviii. 17.

This buoyant and hopeful language is obviously in place on Easter Day. The Psalm which contains it has just been sung; we have been placing ourselves among the Jews just restored to their homes after the Babylonish Captivity. It was sung for the first time either at laying the foundation-stone of the new Temple, or at its dedication: and it breathes, in every line, the spirit of thankfulness, of triumph, of hope. It is the Hymn of the Deliverance from the Captivity, just as Miriam's song is the Hymn of Deliverance from Egypt:[1] it is such a *Te Deum* as was possible when as yet the Gospel had not been revealed.

The situation is implied rather than described. Heathendom has done its worst; but Israel has triumphed. The heathen had compassed Israel

[1] Exod. xv. 20, 21.

about "like bees,"[1] in countless, thronging numbers; they had "thrust sore"[2] at Israel: but "the voice of joy and salvation was now heard in the dwellings of the righteous:"[3] the "right hand of the Lord had brought mighty things to pass."[4] The bondage of seventy years is over: God has "broken the gates of brass, and smitten the bars of iron in sunder:"[5] the perils of the desert have been safely traversed; and Israel is again in the home which, it had seemed, had been left for ever. And the people are keeping high festival: the day itself is consecrated. The Temple gates are bidden open before the advancing procession; the "gates of righteousness," as they are called, must open, for they lead the way to the altar of the All-Holy. And then as the throng passes within, the Psalmist notes a circumstance which forms a leading feature in his poem. In building the new Temple, some block of stone had been, at first, laid aside as useless, and then, on fuller consideration, it had been lifted up to fill one of the most important positions in the structure.[6] In the Psalmist's eyes, this was a parable, setting forth the recent history of the Jewish people. That people had seemed, as it went into its exile, to be laid aside as no longer of any account in the work of building up the moral and religious future of the world: it had

[1] Ps. cxviii. 12. [2] *Ib.* 13. [3] *Ib.* 15.
[4] *Ib.* 16. [5] *Ib.* cvii. 16. [6] *Ib.* cxviii. 22.

had its day; and it was forgotten. But lo! in the hands of the Great Builder of the temple of human history, there is a sudden shifting and readjustment of the materials of empire; Babylon itself dissolves in ruins; Persia becomes mistress of the East: and the nation which was but now cast aside as worthless by Nebuchadnezzar, is honourably replaced in its ancient and consecrated home by Cyrus. And thus the stone which the human builders of the world's politics rejected, the same is made the head of the corner: only no merely human foresight could have foreseen, no merely human power could have compassed such result: "This is the Lord's doing, and it was marvellous in the eyes" of His servants.[1] Nor is this all. Still around the restored people were hovering many and implacable enemies; the old vindictive animosities which, in "the day of Jerusalem,"[2] had hailed with delight the Babylonian triumph, were irritated into new life by the spectacle of the Restoration; Edom, Ammon, Moab, the Arabian tribes, threatened mischief, if only and whenever they might have opportunity. But the Psalmist, impersonating the restored nation, is hopeful—nay, confident. The recent deliverance was itself the warrant of triumphs to come. Let Israel only be true to its high destiny, and He Who had done so much for His people will not leave them a prey to the enemies around: "I shall

[1] Ps. cxviii. 23. [2] *Ib.* cxxxvii. 7.

not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

And indeed this confidence stood the Jewish people in good stead. It carried them through the vicissitudes of the Persian rule, through the cruel oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes, through the troubled days of the Herodian dynasty. It was only forfeited when they virtually rejected its true ground and basis; when they broke, as St. Paul showed them,[1] with all the antecedents of their history, by rejecting that Son of David, Who was also David's Lord, and in leading up to Whom Israel had fulfilled its appointed destiny.

Thus we have in the words, and indeed throughout the Psalm, a buoyant sense of recovered power, which looks hopefully forward into the uncertain future. And of this the secret is a quickened conviction of the Presence of God among His people. Just as some two centuries earlier, when Sennacherib was threatening Jerusalem, a Psalmist had sung that "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early;"[2] so now the warrant of confidence is the same, "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."[3] The Psalm passes from stanza to stanza in an ever-swelling volume of thankful hope: "The Lord is my

[1] Acts xiii. 16–41. [2] Ps. xlvi. 5. [3] *Ib.* cxviii. 6.

strength and my song, and is become my salvation."[1] "The Lord hath chastened and corrected me: but He hath not given me over unto death."[2] "This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it."[3] "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

I

Had this however been all that there is to be said about the words before us, it would have been better to have gone elsewhere for an Easter text. What did these words mean in the Mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ? It may be said at once, and confidently, that He made the words His Own. During His earthly Life, the Book of Psalms was His Prayer-book. And those Psalms, we may be sure, which were believed to refer to the promised Messiah, were often in His Heart and on His Lips. To Him the immediate historical reference was less than the deeper although secondary sense of the words: He knew the meaning of His Own Spirit better than did the Psalmist whom His Spirit had inspired. So He ignores the reference to the rejected and restored people: He is, Himself, the corner-stone. Had not Isaiah said that Israel's Saviour was to be "despised and rejected of men,"[4] before the hour of triumph came when

[1] Ps. cxviii. 14. [2] *Ib.* 18. [3] *Ib.* 24. [4] Isa. liii. 3.

He should "divide the spoil with the strong"?[1] and was not this fulfilled accurately in the earthly Life of Jesus? And therefore when, four days before His Passion, He had uttered in the Temple that solemn parable of the husbandmen, who after beating and killing and stoning their Master's servants, end by slaying the son, and casting him out of the vineyard,[2] He desired to bring the reality sharply home to the consciences of His hearers, and at the same time to announce the certain but unsuspected issue of all that they were then meditating. Therefore He suddenly asked them, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The Stone Which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner?"[3]

Thus we see what was the meaning of this Psalm as used by our Lord. The Cross and grave have taken the place of the Babylonian bondage; the Restoration to Palestine is forgotten in the Resurrection. This single verse throws light on all the rest; and we cannot doubt what our Lord meant by saying, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Before His Crucifixion the words were a prophecy of the Resurrection. Unlike ourselves, our Lord throughout His earthly Life knew what was before Him. From us the future is hidden in mercy: we could not bear the sight, it may be, if the veil were lifted. But our

[1] Isa. liii. 12. [2] St. Matt. xxi. 39. [3] *Ib.* 42.

Lord surveyed everything. He contemplated each detail of the Passion for years before it was undergone; and of course He accentuated and extended His sufferings by the contemplation. The motto of this period of His Life was, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"[1] And yet the foreknowledge which surveyed His coming agony surveyed also the peace and triumph beyond. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again."[2] He was to die, yet He was to rise; it was the prospect of death modified by the prospect of triumph over death; it was Calvary, but already irradiated by the Resurrection morning. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." But after the Resurrection the words must have a fuller meaning; they became to Him more literally true. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."[3]

This is indeed the crowning glory of the Easter Victory: it is final. The sorrow of Gethsemane, the humiliations of the judgment-hall, the lingering torture on Calvary, are passed for ever; they never

[1] St. Luke xii. 50. [2] *Ib.* xviii. 31–33. [3] Rom. vi. 9.

can be renewed. "For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."[1] We have heard of victories which are no sooner achieved than other victories become necessary in order to secure their advantages. But when Jesus rose from His grave on Easter Day, the sting of death was extracted, and the power of the grave conquered, once for all. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."[2] Henceforth He will declare the works of the Lord. For forty days He will hold converse with His Apostles as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. And then He will send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, "to take of" what He had already taught in parable or epigram, and "show it to" His Church, in its full significance of creed and doctrine.[3] And His envoys, speaking in His Name, and as His mouthpieces, shall "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,"[4] even to the end of time.

Yes! He is living now. We do not see Him: He has withdrawn Himself beyond the veil; but tokens are not wanting which go to show that He is within hearing, that He watches and shapes the course of the world, and the destinies of His Church, and the lives of His servants. He has a better reason for His confidence than had Israel

[1] Rom. vi. 10. [2] Rev. i. 18. [3] St. John xvi. 15.
[4] St. Mark xvi. 15.

after the Restoration. The Presence of God in Israel was liable to forfeiture by disloyalty; it was, as we know, forfeited in the sequel of events. In our Lord and Saviour this Presence is linked to His Manhood, by a union, personal and indissoluble. He speaks as Man, for ever united with Deity; and His sense of possessing an imperishable life becomes, when deposited in the heart of His Church, a power of recovery and survival which yields a new meaning to the words that may well engage our attention.

II

"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

We listen here to an utterance of the heart of the Christian Church, again and again heard during the centuries of her eventful history. In many ways the Passion and Resurrection of Christ have been reflected in the later fortunes of Christianity; and especially the Church's power of recovery from weakness and disaster is a note and proof of her union with Christ. This her vital and recuperative energy is His Who "was crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the power of God." [1]

In three ways, the Church of Christ has been, from time to time, brought down, to all appearance,

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

to the chambers of the dead, and from this deep depression she has risen again to newness of life.

First, there has been the distress and suffering produced by outward persecution. For nearly three hundred years the imperial government of Rome was engaged in an almost uninterrupted attempt to stamp out the Church by physical force. No forms of torture were unemployed in order to expel religious conviction from the souls of Christians. Old men and maidens, young men and children, gave their witness, on scaffolds, in amphitheatres, in deserts, on mountain-sides, to the Name of Jesus. One emperor failed in the enterprise; but another took up the task. After Nero came Domitian, after Decius, Diocletian. At last the arms of the old empire became enfeebled by age; and the wild cries of the barbarians were heard more and more distinctly along a thousand miles of frontier; and paganism in its decay could persecute no more. Yet at times it had seemed that the Faith might be killed out from among men. It was natural to take this view of things, if men had no adequate idea of the forces and principles in conflict;—organised physical might on one side, and a Creed, resting only on unseen realities, on the other.

But all through these dark and dreary years, the secret leaven of the Resurrection power of Jesus was working in the heart of Christendom. Never

was the darkness so thick that no ray of light reached the soul of the suffering Church. Never was her cause so desperate but that she could, not boastfully or in scorn, but in the clear, albeit broken accents of faith and hope, utter her unfailing conviction: "The empire will pass, but Jesus Christ remains; 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'"

Next, the Church has been exposed more than once to a more formidable danger,—the decay of vital convictions within her fold.

This happened in the early part of the thirteenth century, when the Arabian philosophers of Moorish Spain were so widely read in the Universities of Europe, and caused for some years a secret but profound unsettlement of faith in the leading truths of Christianity. So again, at the revival of letters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially in Italy. So also, and conspicuously in the eighteenth century, we may almost say, throughout Europe. The great anti-Christian campaign was opened in England by Bolingbroke, Tindal, and the English Deists. It was carried on in France by their pupil—for such virtually he was—Voltaire, and the Encyclopædist writers. It found a powerful patron in Frederick the Great of Prussia. It closed, in Germany, with Lessing, who mistook criticism for faith, and to whom the search for

truth seemed better than its possession; and with Nicolai, and other writers of the "enlightenment" period; while on the western bank of the Rhine, the worship of the goddess of Reason was keeping time with the horrors of the Revolutionary Tribunal and of the Reign of Terror. "I am tired," Voltaire once said, "of hearing that it took only twèlve men to set up Christianity in the world; I will show that it needs but one man to destroy it." There were Christians to whom it seemed that Christianity had had its day; that God must have withdrawn His protective survey from the world of human thought; and that all the waves and storms of insurrectionary blasphemy were at last burying out of sight and for ever the Gospel of Christ. But that age was also the age of not a few saintly Christians, both in England and elsewhere. And they were sure that the Faith and Church of Christ had not forfeited the power of recovery which is lodged in them by Christ's Resurrection. Years passed, and men who were not religious came to see that, whatever were Voltaire's powers in other directions, his shallow scornful treatment of the Bible resembled the art of the schoolboy who earns the cheap laughter of his fellows by painting a moustache on a fine antique, and running away. Years passed, and theories which were merely negative, and had no substantial truth or help to give whereby minds might be illuminated and wills invigorated, and

souls refreshed, were seen in their real poverty and nakedness. And thus men turned their eyes back to the creed of their forefathers and to the spiritual mother that had blessed them in their infancy. But all through that dreary century, in the heart of the Church was repeated the profound unsurrendered conviction: "These writers may say what they will: and yet 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.'"

Once more, and worst of all, the Church has been exposed to moral corruption. So it was, we know, within certain limits, under the eyes of the Apostle himself at Corinth. So it was in the tenth century, when the highest places in the hierarchy were controlled by the unhappy Theodora and Marozia.[1] We need not multiply illustrations; but here surely is an evil more perilous far than any persecutor's sword, or even than any form of intellectual rebellion. And yet in times like these, however grave has been the scandal, or deep-seated the disease, the heart of the Church has remained sound. The thousands or millions of simple folk, who have been true, on the whole, to the light which God has given them, true to their faith in a Crucified Redeemer, and a sanctifying Spirit, and the claims of conscience, and the imminence of a world beyond the grave,—these have been the

[1] Milman, *Lat. Christ.* ii. 451, Bk. v. c. 11.

real soul of the Church, the root from which new saplings and shoots would spring. And in their life of faith and hope, whatever might be the load of distress and discouragement, there has reigned all along the profound conviction that the faith and life of Christendom would not perish; that the Church still might say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Good men always feel strongly the evils of their own day; it is their business to recognise and to combat them. But in doing so they are sometimes led to think that no previous age has been so weighted with energetic mischief as their own. Here there is a risk of losing a true sense of proportion; of not merely exaggerating the evils of present as compared with those of past times, but of forgetting the Divine resources upon which the Church of Christ may always fall back, and which are more than equal to her needs. Let us be sure that to believe that Christ has risen is to know that, come what may, His Church will not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

III

But, once more, in these words we have the true language of the individual Christian soul, whether in recovery from illness, or face to face with death.

And, first, this is the language of the convalescent.

Most of us who have reached middle life have seen some one in an extreme stage of illness. The patient has been given up. The doctors say that the case is hopeless. The relations are making up their minds to the separation, the wrench, the sorrow, the blank, the many forms of trouble that lie before them. It is said to be a question, at most, of days, perhaps only of hours. The sufferer cannot move, cannot speak, rarely opens his eyes, is supposed to be insensible to all that is passing. Perhaps he is keenly alive to every word that is said; but he thinks of himself as despondingly as do others. Hezekiah has described his thoughts in like circumstances:—

"I said, in the cutting off of my days,
I shall go to the gates of the grave:
I am deprived of the residue of my years.
. . . . . .
Mine age is departed,
And is removed from me as a shepherd's tent:
I have cut off like a weaver my life:
He will cut me off with pining sickness:
From day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me."[1]

All seems to be virtually over: and yet—the end does not come. Why this pause before the gates of death? Why this delay, when it needs but a

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 10, 12.

convulsion, or a sigh, and all will have ended? Surely there is something more than hesitation to die; there is a faint sense of increased vitality; there is a surmise, which becomes a hope, a hope which becomes a conviction, that recovery is possible. At last the sufferer murmurs, "I shall not die, but live."

It is a wonderful experience—this resumption of that which had been so solemnly taken leave of; this recovery of a sense of power and possession, when, as it seemed, all had been for ever resigned. One by one they come back,—the use of each deadened sense; the power to wield each languid limb; the free and buoyant exercise of first this and then that faculty of the mind which had sympathised so deeply with the weakness of the failing body. "I remember," says one,[1] not long since taken from us, who when ill was wont to pass the hours of weariness and pain in repeating the Hebrew Psalms, "I remember how, in recovering from an illness, I could just say, 'Thou shalt purge me with hyssop.'[2] I could not possibly recall the next words. A day later, 'and I shall be clean' flashed on me. Then I knew that I was better."

Convalescence! it is like a renewal of youth

[1] Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., who described this experience to the author.

[2] Ps. li. 7.

when its strength is developed and its freshness has not yet passed. It is like a bright day in October re-animating, in the gloom of the falling year, the sense of recovered sunshine and life which belongs to spring. Convalescence! yes, it soon passes; its first vigour and freshness die away into the experiences of average life; but, meanwhile, what has it done for us? Is it nothing, think you, to have been thus face to face with death, to have surveyed from this Pisgah the plains of the land of promise; to have touched the very gate of the grave, and felt the powers of the world to come playing around us; to have had experiences which come to most men only once—when they have set out on that journey from which none return? Is it nothing to have been the object of those anxieties, those forebodings, those watchings, those prayers; to have been taken leave of by friends on earth; to have been waited for perhaps by evil spirits, perhaps by the blessed intelligences in Paradise? The legend that the risen Lazarus was never seen to smile expresses the sense of mankind as to what beseems him who has passed the threshold of the other world; and surely a new and peculiar seriousness is due from those who have all but passed it, and have returned to life by little less than a resurrection. Of what remains of life the motto should surely be, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Surely such a life must be consecrated; it is not thus paradoxically restored that it may forthwith be wasted; it must, by word and deed, by precept and example, be a living exposition of the Unseen; like the Risen Jesus, and in virtue of His Resurrection power, it must declare the works of the Lord.

But further, these words should express the feeling of every Christian soul, in the prospect of death and eternity.

We all of us have to die. There are many contingencies in life: but death is not a contingency. Everything indeed relating to it is uncertain; its date, its manner, its attendant circumstances. But death itself is, in the case of every human being, a certainty. It is appointed unto all men once to die.[1] But there are two very different estimates of death. Is it the end of all things to us? Or is it a passing experience, an episode, in a vastly extended, nay, unending existence?

Nothing is more pathetic than the study of efforts which for thousands of years the human mind has made to answer this question; straining thought and fancy, and often what it believed to be experience, if only it might see the outline of that land which lies beyond the grave. Certainly it is impossible to read the dialogues in which great

[1] Heb. ix. 27.

heathens, like Plato in one age and Cicero in another, endeavoured to satisfy themselves of the spirituality and survival of the soul, without sympathy and admiration for their anxious reaching after higher truth, their cautious, reverent, although at times necessarily mistaken endeavour to grasp the realities which are so familiar to Christians. For them immortality was a guess, rising, according to the temper of different minds, upwards towards certainty; they hoped rather than knew that the immaterial principle in man would survive the grave. Something more is needed to enable Christians to say, as we do, each of us, say, if we are Christians indeed, "When my body is laid in the dust, I shall not die; my true self, my personal being, will live, and, through Christ's grace, will declare His redeeming work to all eternity."

Jesus Christ our Lord has brought life and immortality to light.[1] Again and again He has in words taught us that there is a life beyond the grave; as when He says, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."[2] But He has done more: He has made recovery from death even of the body palpable to the senses. He has, by His Resurrection, transferred the question of man's future from the region of speculation to that of experience, from the invisible world to the world of sight and touch. It is not for us Christians to say, "Man

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10. [2] St. Matt. x. 39.

may survive death." We should know that he will. It is not for us to say, "Man may be reunited to the material form which has been so intimately associated here with his life of consciousness and resolve." We should know that this reunion is a certainty. Jesus Christ surely has not risen that we should live on in the twilight of conjecture as to the destiny that awaits us. He has risen, for this end among others, that He may one day "change our vile body, that it be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."[1]

Do not let us confuse the fact of our survival after what we call death with our consciousness of it. The fact is as independent of human consciousness as the sun in the heavens. The sun is there whether we recognise him or not. The supersensuous realities are what they are, whatever be our mental attitude towards them; the world of fact does not dance attendance upon the petty, fitful, uncertain world of human thought. But what we think habitually on the subject is to each one of us a matter of the greatest moment, since our fitness for the inevitable future depends upon the preparation which is being made for it by our minds and hearts and wills in our present state of existence.

With thousands of men there is no speculative

[1] Phil. iii. 21.

difficulty as to the future life. The real speculative difficulty would be to suppose that such a force as the human mind could possibly be extinguished by the dissolution of the human body. And the resurrection of the human body is not more wonderful, because it is more unfamiliar, than its birth. But men who admit this still say, "How am I to acquire, and carry about with me, and act upon, this practical conviction, this ever-present sense of the future that awaits me? How am I to turn a speculative conclusion into a persuasion that shall sway, and mould, and completely influence my life? How am I to learn, in this sense to say, 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord'?"

The answer must be: Give your conviction a chance of growing. A conviction of a working kind depends less upon exact processes of the intellect than upon loyalty of the heart and will. If a man knows that a great earthly future is before him upon which he has not yet entered, he dwells on it in his leisure moments, and, though his life be a busy one, he makes time to prepare for it. If you would have the Christian sense of living for Eternity, allow time for it in your present life. We have spoken of Germany in the last century; it offers few more interesting characters than Haller, the great naturalist, who made physiology a science. Haller was professor at Göttingen, but his reputation and his activity were European; the Universities of

Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Paris, Florence, Bologna, Padua, accounted it an honour to reckon him among their members; not merely German princes, but the Emperor Joseph the Second eagerly sought his friendship. After his death a private diary was found, which shows how on every day in this busiest of lives, so constantly devoted to the scientific investigation of matter, time was made for communion with the Unseen, and for meditation on the Future. "Enable me to think," these are his words, "in this still hour, on eternity, and prize at their true worth the poor joys of this fleeting life." "May I not only know, but feel, that, if I have not peace with Thee my God, I have nothing; and that the most enjoyable of such lives is but a sad dream, which eternity will end."[1]

If a man has a serious conviction, he makes ventures on the strength of it, and these ventures in return strengthen, deepen, broaden the conviction. Act as men who have Eternity before you, and you will soon have no doubts about its reality. Especially is the sense of the future world strengthened and deepened by our accompanying the dying, so far as we may, on their journey towards it. The poet of the *Christian Year* notes this effect of joining in communion with the sick, in lines which are not easily forgotten, when once attention has been called to them:—

[1] Quoted in Hagenbach's *Germ. Rationalism*.

"O soothe us, haunt us, night and day,
Ye gentle spirits far away,
With whom we shared the cup of grace,
Then parted;—ye to Christ's embrace,
We to the lonesome world again—
Yet mindful of the unearthly strain
Practised with you at Eden's door,
To be sung on, where angels soar,
With blended voices, evermore."[1]

All this will seem easy and natural, if, in the Apostle's words, we have "risen with Christ." The sense of immortality will be enfeebled and die away, should we constantly live as though this world alone were real, and the other only a shadowy and distant uncertainty. But if, escaping from the grave of sense as well as the grave of sin, we retire like our Risen Lord from the sight of men, for communion with the Unseen; if, by His grace, we have the heart to turn away from the finite and the perishing to the Imperishable and the Infinite, we shall learn the lessons of eternity during the hours of time, and shall know as others cannot know, that, whenever or however death may await us, we shall not die, but live, and shall hereafter, as now, declare the works of the Lord.

[1] *The Christian Year:* Visitation of the Sick.

SERMON VIII

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD[1]

"I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God."—Acts xx. 27.

HERE is one of those passages in the New Testament, which make a forcible and direct appeal to the heart and conscience of every man who has undertaken or is undertaking to serve God in Holy Orders. The words occur in that parting charge to the Presbyters of the Church of Ephesus, which on the eve of his going up to Jerusalem, at the close of what is termed his third Missionary journey, the great Apostle delivered on the strand at Miletus. They are such words as escape men at the turning-points of life, at entering upon or taking leave of great responsibilities—compressed, fervid utterances of the deepest thought and of the strongest currents

[1] Preached at the Ordination of the Bishop of Salisbury, in the Abbey Church of St. Mary, Sherborne, on the Second Sunday in Lent, February 21, 1864.

of feeling—of thought and feeling which for the moment will not be pent up and restrained within the barriers of ordinary habit, or of studied reserve. Even a saint may, nay, at certain times, he must speak of himself: and so the great Apostle glances hastily at the labours and sufferings which had marked his sojourn at Ephesus.[1] Then he points anxiously to the lowering future: he tells his hearers the precise limits of his supernatural knowledge. The exact form of each of the many trials before him he did not know; but he knew generally, that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him, and in particular, that he and they to whom he spake would meet again in this world no more.[2] Under the pressing urgency of this conviction, he predicts the coming sorrows of the Church of Ephesus—the Church indeed of St. Timothy and of St. John, but also the Church of men who denied the central truth of the Resurrection;[3] the Church of Hymenæus, and Philetus and Alexander; the Church of the Nicolaitans, whose morals were hateful (we are told in the Apocalypse) to the Lord Jesus;[4] the Church, as it might seem from St. John's first Epistle, of some of the earliest heretics, who denied the real Union of Godhead and Manhood in our Lord and Saviour.[5] Indeed, only a few years later, we see

[1] Vers. 18–21.
[2] Vers. 22, 25.
[3] 1 Tim. i. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.
[4] Rev. ii. 6.
[5] 1 St. John iv. 2, 3.

in the two Epistles to Timothy the clear traces of an organised opposition to Christian truth at Ephesus, so formidable in its various intellectual activities, that the stern energy of the Apostle's language in the speech before us is only understood when read by the light of a struggle, unlike to, and in some respects more serious than, any other within the limits of the Apostolical Age.

Casting his eye over this troubled future, St. Paul utters a prophecy of mournful solemnity. "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."[1] He exhorts them to watch: he commends them tenderly to God: but he also recalls to them the full measure of their personal responsibility. His ministry had put them in entire possession of the truth as it had come from heaven: and, if they fell into the snares which lay thick around their future path, they could not, when facing the knowledge and the justice of God, attempt to shelter themselves under the plea of ignorance. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you, all the counsel of God."[2]

The whole counsel of God! Such is the Apostle's expression for that fixed body of Truth,

[1] Acts xx. 29, 30. [2] *Ib.* 26, 27.

which we of this day name more commonly the Gospel, the Revelation of Christ, the Faith of Christians. St. Paul says, that he had declared the whole mind—that is, the whole revealed mind—of God. Observe, of God. His language excludes that conception of religious truth which makes it merely the product of the truest, purest, deepest thoughts of the highest and largest minds among the sons of men. "Flesh and blood" had not revealed to St. Peter the dignity and the claims of Jesus.[1] "Flesh and blood" added nothing to that Revelation of His Son which the Eternal Father had made to the soul of St. Paul.[2] Resting on a Divine Authority, and being human only so far as was necessary if it was to close with the intellect and the heart of man,—human in its condescensions and human in its sympathy, but in its truth and essence Divine—the Gospel was for St. Paul unlike any other object-matter that entered into his thought. It was sundered by a broad line of demarcation from all else that seemed like it on this side or on that; it did not shade off into any either of the higher philosophies or of the less sensual idolatries of the time. So absolutely and exclusively true did he deem this Gospel-truth to be, that could an Angel from heaven have been conceived as preaching any other, the Apostle would unhesitatingly have held him "accursed."[3]

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 17. [2] Gal. i. 16. [3] *Ib.* i. 8.

The whole counsel of God! It was God's word, not man's; it was neither the result of a thoughtful speculation, nor yet an approximate guess, nor yet a cunningly devised fable. Being God's word, it was as a *whole* worthy of the best thought and love that His creature could give it. That ministry of three months in the great Ephesian synagogue,[1] and then the two years which followed of laborious teaching in the School of the Rhetorician Tyrannus,[2] and last, but not least, the wide publicity, the general attention,[3] and the active hatred of heathen foes which culminated in the Riot of the Amphitheatre,[4] had enabled the Apostle to put forward the Gospel, the whole area of its Doctrine, the many sides on which it attracted, and awed, and subdued the soul of man—in unabridged unmutilated completeness. "All they which dwelt in Asia (*i.e.* Asia Minor) heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

This solemn and momentous day may be the very crisis of their destiny to those of us who are waiting to receive a Commission from heaven at the Altar of this noble Minster. And the words of the Apostle may serve us well, as a guide to our thoughts, our aspirations, our resolves. These time-honoured walls cannot but recall to a stranger some of the most cherished memories of the Anglo-Saxon

[1] Acts xix. 8.
[2] *Ib.* 9, 10.
[3] *Ib.* 10, 17, 20.
[4] *Ib.* 23–41.

Church ;[1] while in their renewed beauty they speak not less persuasively of the renovated life of the modern Church of England. Can we forget to-day that well-nigh eight centuries have passed since here at Sherborne the Commission of Christ was handed on by a predecessor of our Chief Pastor to those who in the early ages of our national history sought to serve God within the precincts of the Sanctuary? How vast, we feel, is the life of a Church, when contrasted with the fleeting existence of her members : yet how insignificant, when we place it side by side with the Being of her Everlasting Lord ! His Person, His Word, the Laws of His Kingdom and of His Service, the results of His doctrine upon the soul of man, are at this hour what they were at the first, what they will be to the end of time. And if instead of losing ourselves in vague reflection, we would give a practical turn to our (it may be) somewhat eager tide of thought and feeling, let us fix our attention on this primal, this simple duty of an ordained man—the declaration of the whole counsel of God. When St. Paul asserts that he has not "shunned" to declare it, the English word, and yet more strongly[2] the original for which it stands,

[1] Cf. *Handbook to the Abbey Church of St. Mary, Sherborne*, by the Rev. E. Harston, pp. 32–38.

[2] ὑπεστειλάμην, cf. Meyer *in loc.* Dr. Wordsworth sees in it a nautical metaphor, which might have been suggested by the scene before the speaker.

must remind us that there are many motives and hindrances calculated to keep a man back from doing that which must be done, if he fears his God, if he cares for his own soul, if he has any true love for the souls of those to whom of his own free will he undertakes to minister.

I

Now one cause of failure in this primary duty would seem to lie in a lack of religious knowledge. It is much more easy to be deficient in essential knowledge of religious truth than we are apt to assume. I do not contemplate the extreme case of ignorance, whether this or that doctrine does or does not lie within the limits of Revealed Truth. For it would be simply immoral in a Christian Teacher not to have learnt the frontier and outline of that sacred deposit of the Faith which our Lord and Saviour has committed to His Church to hold fast and to hand on to the end of time. But far short of this extreme shortcoming, may we not too easily acquiesce in an ignorance which is scarcely less fatal to souls? May we not lapse into a habit of thinking and speaking of the doctrines of the Gospel, as if they were like soldiers in a regiment,—so many units, each adding something no doubt to the collective bulk and area of doctrine, while yet

in no way essential to its organic completeness, and therefore each capable of being withdrawn, without inflicting any more serious injury upon the entire truth than that of diminished size? Do we not hear persons talk of the articles of the Creed in this way,—as if each article was a perfectly separate and new truth,—as if each was, I might almost say, a new and gratuitous infliction upon the reluctant intellect of man,—as if each was round and perfect in itself, and had no relations whatever to any truth beyond it?

Yet what does such language really prove but defective knowledge in those (be they who they may) who use it? They "know" the doctrines of the faith only as so many separate propositions. Of the Great Whole, which lies beyond the words, —the several sides of which the words do at best but imperfectly represent,—of the Body and Substance of the Faith, they know little or nothing. They fail to perceive the connection, the interdependence, the organic unity of all truth that rests on the authority of God. Their view is too superficial to enable them to do justice to that marvellous adjustment of truth to truth, of faculty to object, of result to cause, which is a direct and obvious perception to souls who gaze prayerfully and steadily at the complete Revelation of Christ. These really shortsighted persons do not miss a revealed doctrine which is withdrawn; nor are they offended

when a human speculation is elevated to co-ordinate rank with the certainties of Faith. It seems to them to be merely a question between more or less belief; between a larger or a smaller creed; between, as they would speak, a greater or a less number of dogmas. But in reality each truth touches, implies, has relations to, truths right and left of it; and these relations are so intimate and so vital, that no truth can be withdrawn, and leave conterminous truths intact. The Faith is, if I may say so with reverence, so marvellously compacted, so instinct with a pervading life, as to resemble a natural organism, I had almost said a living creature. Just as St. James says of the moral law, that he who offends in one point is guilty of all,[1] because of the unity of the impaired principle; and as St. Paul teaches, that in the body of the Church, if one limb or member suffer, all the members suffer with it,[2] in virtue of an internal and necessary sympathy; so in the Creed, no one truth can be misrepresented, strained, dislocated, much less withdrawn, without a certain, and frequently an ascertainable injury resulting to other truths which are supposed to be still unquestioned and intact. For there are nerves and arteries which link the very extremities of Revealed Doctrine to its brain and heart; and the wound which a strain or an amputation may inflict, must in its effects extend

[1] St. James ii. 10. [2] 1 Cor. xx. 26, 27.

far beyond the particular doctrine which is the immediate seat and scene of the injury.

This power of perceiving and exhibiting the deeper internal relations and grounds of Christian Doctrine might seem to correspond to that "word of knowledge" (λόγος γνώσεως) which in his catalogue of the gifts of the Spirit St. Paul distinguishes from the "word of wisdom" (λόγος σοφίας)—the faculty of stating the truths and mysteries of the faith in clear and precise language.[1] It is to be won partly by the culture and exercise of the sanctified intellect in study, partly, nay rather specially, by prayer for illumination and a habit of meditation on Scripture and the Creeds. There are eminent exercises of this gift within the limits of inspiration. St. Paul's demonstration of the fatal antagonism of the practice of the circumcision to true belief in our Lord's redemptive work, in the Epistle to the Galatians, will naturally occur to us. Of uninspired instances I may refer to that masterly and well-known

[1] σοφία nämlich ist die höhere christliche Weisheit (1 Cor. ii. 6) an und für sich, so dass Rede, welche die Lehrstücke (Mysterien) derselben ausspricht, klar macht, anwendet, u. s. w., λόγος σοφίας ist. Damit ist aber die tiefdringende Erkenntniss dieser Lehrstücke, die speculative Erfassung und Einsicht und Verarbeitung ihres Zusammenhangs, ihrer Gründe, ihrer tiefern Ideen, ihrer Beweise, ihrer Ziele, u. s. w. noch nicht gesetzt; eine Rede aber, welche sicht damit beschäftigt, ist λόγος γνώσεως. Meyer in 1 Cor. xii. 8.

account of the connection between the doctrine of the Sacraments and the doctrine of the Incarnation, which the English Church owes to the mind, and which she studies in the language of the great Hooker.

When a man possesses this gift of knowledge—of "knowledge" in the technical sense of St. Paul—he will teach the whole truth not by an effort or mechanically, but in virtue of an instinct. He will be carried forward, from principle to application, from centre to circumference, from the heart and brain of doctrine to its utmost extremities; because he sees, he cannot but see, its evident, its organic unity; because to mutilate it would be to him scarcely anything short of a moral and intellectual agony. A living faith, informed by study, and quickened and stimulated by prayer, can hardly be guilty of accidental, never of culpable reticence; it cannot but "declare the whole counsel of God."

II

A second hindrance is lack of courage. To speak for God to man,—for the Just and Holy God to man, sinful and wilful in his sin—requires nerve and courage. To represent God as He is—as Just no less than Merciful, as punishing sin no less certainly than rewarding faith and holiness—this, to be done well and honestly, requires courage.

Moses before Pharaoh, Samuel before Saul, Micaiah before Ahab, Jeremiah before the Princes of Judah, St. John the Baptist before Herod Antipas, St. Stephen before the Sanhedrim, St. Paul before Felix and Agrippa, and (in a sense altogether peculiar and unrivalled) our Divine Lord before the Jewish Priest and the Roman Magistrate—these represent the attitude and the fortunes of truth at the bar of human nature. Human nature indeed is wretched, and it craves for comfort—that, my clerical brethren, that is our opportunity;[1] but it is also proud, and it resents humiliations—ay, and it is strong, and likely, in its own fashion and way, to express its roused resentment. Of old they understood this well, who went forth uplifting the cross, while yet baring their breasts to death. They knew that the patient to whom they were carrying the medicine that would cure him would often refuse the draught, and would punish the physician who dared to offer it. But they loved man, and they loved and feared their God too sincerely and too well, to infuse new ingredients, or to withdraw any of the bitter but needful elements of cure. They accepted civil and social proscription; they endured moral and physical agony; they embraced, one after another, with cheerful hearts, the very warrants and instruments of their death,—because they had counted the cost,

[1] 2 Cor. i. 4.

and had measured too well the greatness of their task, and the glories of their anticipated eternity, to shrink sensitively back at the first symptoms of opposition, or of difficulty. St. Paul might have foreseen the conduct of Demetrius, and the tumult in the amphitheatre; but this was no serious reason for considering the worship of Diana as a sort of modified or imperfect revelation, or as anything short of a hateful lie.[1] He did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God.

If I yet feared men, says the Apostle, I should not be the servant of Christ.[2] The man who is not in very deed emancipated from bondage to any human fear cannot do justice either to the needs of his fellow-men or the Rights of God. He cannot be loyal to Truth. There are petty oppositions, petty persecutions, indirect yet powerful influences, which will stay a man's hand, and silence his tongue, even in this age and land of civil freedom; unless his conscience be quick and his will strong, through a constant sight of One Who is the Lord and the Subject of that Truth which He proclaims. He will abridge, soften down, mutilate his message, unless he have pene-

[1] St. Paul's speech at Athens recognises that element of natural Religion which is at the bottom of all superstitions, however debased. What the Apostle really thought of the Paganism of the Ancient World as a whole is best understood from such passages as Rom. i. 23–32.

[2] Gal. i. 10.

trated the certainty that the fear of man bringeth a snare[1]—to all indeed who would serve God in sincerity of purpose,—to none, with such fatal and destructive results, as to the man who undertakes to serve Him in the Christian Priesthood.

III

The want of spirituality of heart and soul is a third cause of defective representation of doctrine. To speak for God to the souls of men, a man must himself, in his inmost soul, have consciously stood face to face with that truth of which he speaks.[2] He must speak *of God* as one who has known at once His dread awfulness and His tender love; *of sin*, as that which he feels to be the one master-evil, and with which as such he has struggled in good truth within his secret self; *of Christ*, His Person, His propitiatory and atoning Death, His life-giving Sacraments, as of the Person and Acts of a dear Friend, loved with the heart's warmest and best affection, while yet adored with the deepest homage and by the chiefest powers of his prostrate spirit; *of Eternity* as of that for which he is himself making daily solemn preparation; *of prayer, and the care of conscience* and the culture of purity and truth within, as of things of which he knows something by trial and exercise, perhaps even something

[1] Prov. xxix. 25. [2] 1 St. John i. 1–3.

more by failure. Himself a redeemed sinner speaking to sinners who need or who have found their Redeemer, he will speak in earnest. The issues of endless life or endless death may hang upon his words; but his strength must lie in the profound conviction that he is but the instrument and organ of One Whose livery he wears before the eyes of men, and without Whom he can do nothing. Christian Preaching may be defined either as Speaking for God, or as Speaking to souls; but whichever definition a man keeps most prominently before him, he must aim in the pulpit at making a spiritual as distinct from a merely literary effort. Above him is the Father of Spirits, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto. Before him is the human soul, strong, subtle, intricate, with untold capabilities for good and evil, for joy and agony. Surely he cannot but keep close to those great truths which warm the heart and nerve the will, and raise the whole spiritual being from sin to holiness, from death to life, from the miseries and degradations of mere nature to the sanctities and magnificence of grace. But if the preacher should himself stand outside the spiritual life; if prayer, communion with God, discipline of the will, culture of the affections,—if these things should seem to him but an extravagance or a fanaticism, and if the Faith of the Church be only lodged in his understanding, as

an important fact in the history of opinion, or as the bare result of an arithmetical calculation; then it is not difficult to see how he will presently fail, as a matter of course, to declare the whole counsel of God. His thought will drift naturally away from the central and most solemn truths to the literary embellishments which surround the faith; he will toy with questions of geography, or history, or custom, or scene, or dress; he will reproduce with vivid power the personages and events of long-past ages, it may be with the talent of a master-artist; he will give to the human side of Religion the best of his time and of his toil. In doing this he may, after the world's measure, be doing good work; but let us not deceive ourselves—he will not be saving souls. Souls are saved by men who themselves count all things but dung that they may win Christ, and be found in Him;[1] and who, even if they be men of refined taste and of cultivated intellect, know well how to subordinate the embellishments of Truth to its vital and soul-subduing certainties. Especially if a man should take refuge in the literary aspects of Scripture, because he is not sufficiently assured of its leading truths to reproduce them with the accent—the accent which the people understand so perfectly—of simple unfaltering conviction; then the contrast between his graceful but relatively

[1] Phil. iii. 8.

useless disquisitions, and the glorious Creed of the Church of God—which in its integrity alone responds to the profound yearnings of the soul—will be painful in proportion to the opportunities which he has missed, and to the powers which he has abused.

IV

Once more: here, as in the whole field of ministerial labour, let a man work and pray for the grace of an unselfish spirit. Let him endeavour to strangle the love of self by the love of God and the love of man. For without charity, though a man should speak with the tongues of men or of angels, he will do nought for the real good of his hearers, or for the glory of his Lord. Selfishness will spoil everything. How often are not we, the Representatives of Christ, constrained to rebuke ourselves, humble ourselves, condemn ourselves, by the words which we speak from the Chair of Truth! Some there have been who have yielded to the fatal temptation of being, what they call, consistent. They tone down God's message to the miserable level of their own felt shortcomings. They make of the Gospel a Gospel of acquiescence in sin, rather than a Gospel of redemption from it; they profess to see in it a patronage of the flesh, and a recognition of the world, I had almost said,

a co-partnership with the Evil One. Alas! who can doubt, that unless a man can speak, in simple sincerity, as for Christ and from Christ,—careless though his words should only reach his people at the manifest expense, nay, through the deep humiliation, the self-inflicted, self-adjudged penance of their Minister,—it must needs go hard with him hereafter in the day of account. Better it surely were never to speak at all, than to make the Lord of Purity and Light a seeming accomplice in the crime and darkness of His creature! Far better were silence than the advocacy of an impoverished —a mutilated—a false Gospel—a Gospel robbed of all that is mysterious, awful, supernatural, divine; because, forsooth, to preach the perfect Truth which came from heaven is unbecoming for one who lives, and who feels that he lives, as if it were not true! Even the double-hearted prophet, who knew that he had much to win by falsehood, could not but tell the Pagan king, who would fain have subsidised his inspirations, "Whatsoever the Lord telleth me, that will I speak."[1] And can we, beneath the Cross of Christ, so pander to self, as to "handle the word of God deceitfully"? Dare we say less than what we know to be Truth, because we know also that Truth in its fulness would be our condemnation?

Or take another illustration of the need of an

[1] Numb. xxii. 38; xxiii. 12, 26; xxiv. 13.

unselfish spirit. It is possible, nay probable, that we may have what are called favourite doctrines, sections or sides of Truth through which God has in a special sense spoken to us, moved us, sanctified us, (as we trust) saved us. Of these, no doubt, we can speak with more power, because with more intimate perception of their bearing on the secret springs of life and death. But we also speak of such points with less of moral and intellectual effort than of others; and this greater facility is likely to be the real cause of our giving them an undue prominence in our cycle of teaching, while we endeavour to whisper to our consciences, and to persuade our friends, that these points are the essentials of the Gospel, and that all the rest is comparatively unnecessary. Thus men teach the Atonement, and ignore the Sacraments; or they teach the need of faith, and ignore the need of love and holiness; or they teach the beauty of our Lord's character, and forget His Propitiatory and Sacrificial Death; or, conversely, they insist upon the outward duties of religion, and do scant justice to the spiritual and internal forces of the soul. We must teach *all* that God has revealed, because He has revealed it, leaving it to Him to touch one soul by this, and another soul by that portion of His Revelation. Even within the limits of inspiration, St. Paul preached faith, and St. John love, and St James practical energy, each giving prominence

(but nothing more) to these several sides of the Christian life, while yet each preached it as a whole. No man of modesty and thoughtfulness would make the narrow circle of experiences that have passed within his own soul the absolute standard of the truths and powers which may act on others: and no duty is more difficult or more serious than that of detaching ourselves from the influence of "favourite doctrines," and, as far as may be, teaching the whole truth in its integrity to all to whom we owe it, as the gift of God. And the Proper Lessons and Epistles and Gospels of the Church Service enable us to correct our natural tendency towards a choice of texts and subjects which fall within our own more contracted area of thought and feeling: so that in making it a rule always to preach from the Services of the Day, or at least on a subject suggested by the season, we make provision against one of the chief temptations to teach something less than the whole counsel of God. Nothing, however, but a spirit of genuine self-sacrifice, nothing but a true love of the souls of men, can enable a man so to forego his own predilections, so to throw himself into the state of mind, and points of view, and peculiar difficulties, and narrower or broader horizons of his hearers, as to lose himself, and the little history of his own spirit, in the mighty work of proclaiming in its perfectness the Truth of God. We know how the

great Apostle combined this perfect consideration for others, with an unflinching, chivalrous loyalty to the claims of Truth. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the Law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."[1] How could self-sacrifice be more unsparing? By whom could the duty of declaring the whole counsel of God be more forcibly proclaimed, than by a man who gave up all else to enable him to discharge it?

Under ordinary circumstances, my brethren, it might be natural at this point to leave the principles which have been insisted on to your mature reflections, and to the obvious force of their intrinsic truth. The duty before us is sufficiently plain; and the risk of wearying you might well lead me to pause, if it were indeed possible to do so. But I yet owe something to the promptings of conscience, and to the Rights of God. Nor would your judgment be harsh or unreasonable, if you

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 19–22.

should interpret my silence as to a matter of pressing and public anxiety, as something less easily to be pardoned than mere failure to satisfy the many claims of this great occasion. Such silence would in fact be nothing short of notorious treachery to the whole spirit and drift of those kindling words, which it has been my endeavour to recommend and illustrate.

At no age of the Church could the ambassadors of Christ have afforded to forget the Apostle's example of "not shunning to declare all the counsel of God." But never was the force of that example more needed than in our own day. Illustrations indeed press so urgently upon the mind, as it ranges over the recent history of the Church, that the preacher's embarrassment lies in the very liberty of his choice: but one illustration, I doubt not, will have occurred to many of us living at this time, and living, my Lord Bishop, under your Lordship's jurisdiction, in this your diocese of Salisbury, with painful but irrepressible prominence. My brethren, it would be an affectation, if I should profess to suppose you ignorant of a recent Judgment,[1] proceeding not indeed from a spiritual but from a temporal Court; which, although it professes, and that eagerly,[2] to avoid

[1] The reference is to the then recent Judgment in the case of Fendall *versus* Wilson.

[2] "With respect to the legal tests of doctrine in the Church

all attempts at formal determination of doctrine, yet does unquestionably determine the *legal* sense and value of doctrinal formularies, and, as doing this, has and must have, practically and morally, no little weight with large classes of our countrymen. That Judgment would seem, among other points, to have ruled, that it is permissible in law for a clergyman to express a "hope" for the final restoration of the lost. No man can know anything of his own sinful heart who does not know how much there is within him which is ready to welcome such a permission; but the question is a question not of the inclinations of a sinful creature, but of the Revealed Will of a Holy God. May we, consistently with that Will, indulge that "hope"? Assuredly not. For nothing is more certain than that by the terms of the Christian revelation any such hope is delusive and vain, since it is opposed to the awful Truth, that they who die out of favour with God and are lost, are

of England, by the application of which we are to try the soundness or unsoundness of the passages libelled, we agree with the learned Judge in the Court below that the Judgment in the Gorham case is conclusive :—This Court has no jurisdiction or authority to settle matters of faith, or to determine what ought in any particular to be the Doctrine of the Church of England. Its duty extends only to the consideration of that which is by law established to be the Doctrine of the Church of England, upon the true and legal construction of her articles and formularies."—Judgment (*Guardian*, Feb. 10, 1864).

lost irrevocably, lost for ever. If Holy Scripture is still to be our Rule of Faith, Scripture, I submit, is decisive. If Hooker's well-known caution as to the interpretation of Scripture, "that where a literal interpretation will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst" is still to be kept in mind, that rule will preclude any serious doubt as to the real mind of Scripture in this solemn matter. Scripture is no less explicit as to the endlessness of the woe of the lost soul than as to the endlessness of the scene or instrument of its punishment. Isaiah speaks of the "everlasting burnings,"[1] Daniel of "everlasting contempt,"[2] our Lord of "the everlasting fire" once and again,[3] St. Paul of "everlasting destruction" or ruin,[4] St. Jude of "a blackness of darkness which is reserved for ever."[5] Three times speaking of the penal woe of the lost, the Apostle of Love uses an expression of energetic redundancy and force: he says that it lasts "unto ages of ages."[6] Just as the elect will reign in

[1] מוֹקְדֵי עוֹלָם Isa. xxxiii. 14.

[2] דִּרְאוֹן עוֹלָם Dan. xii. 2.

[3] *τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον*, St. Matt. xviii. 8, xxv. 41.

[4] *ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον*, 2 Thess. i. 9.

[5] *Οἷς ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετήρηται*, Jude 13.

[6] The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, *εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων*, Rev xiv. 11; *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων*, Rev. xix. 3, and Rev. xx. 10. The language of Isaiah from which this is taken would certainly seem to refer to a more than temporal judgment on Edom and other nations. Isa. xxxiv. 9, 10.

heaven for ever and ever,[1] as holy souls desire that God may be glorified for ever and ever,[2] as Jesus Risen from His grave is alive "for evermore,"[3] as in His glory He shall reign for ever and ever,[4] as the very Life of God Himself is described by saying that "He liveth for ever and ever,"[5] so is this same measure applied to the punishment of the lost souls.[6] Are we to say that a period of limited duration is all that is meant to be ascribed in Scripture to the glory of the blessed in heaven, to the Glorified Life and Reign of Jesus, to the very self-existent Life of God Himself, in order to enable ourselves to rest in the conception of a Purgatory beyond the Final Judgment, as less shocking to our "consciousness" than the Belief in Hell? And if not, can we certainly determine that as applied to Hell this phrase has an altogether narrower sense than that which we ascribe to it in such passages as apply it to Heaven or to the Reign of Christ? Modern scepticism has tampered with the word "Eternal," just as it has emptied "Salvation," "Atonement," "Grace," — nay the very Name of God Himself — of their natural meaning. But "everlasting" means neither more nor less than that which lasts for ever. True indeed it is that the Hebrew expression which,

[1] Rev. xxii. 5. [2] 1 Tim. i. 17; Heb. xiii. 21, etc.
[3] Rev. i. 18. [4] *Ibid.* xi. 15.
[5] *Ibid.* iv. 9, 10, v. 14, x. 6. [6] *Ubi sup.*

when applied to future time, answers to the English "for ever," does in particular instances mean something less than boundless duration. But this is the case only where a limitation is forced upon the word by the subject to which it is applied. Originally the word does imply indefinite,—the nearest approach, perhaps, which the human mind can make to infinite,—extent of continuance. Taken at its lowest range of meaning, it means an existence co-extensive with that to which it is applied.[1] In the New Testament, there is a sub-

[1] עוֹלָם, properly that which is *hidden;* as applied to future time, that which is lost to sight in the distance. Instances of the narrow range of the word may be found in Gen. ix. 12; Ex. xii. 14–17, xxvii. 21, xxviii. 43; Lev. x. 15, etc. Not however in such passages as Ps. xlv. 7, lxxii. 5, 17, lxxxix. 37, where Rationalists limit the word in deference to their own prejudices against the Messianic predictions. Nor again in salutations, 1 Kings i. 31; Neh. ii. 3; Dan. ii. 4, etc., since in these cases the true force of the expression is to be measured by the belief of the Jews in the immortality of the soul. Of what range of meaning the word is really capable will be best understood from a consideration of the following extract from Gesenius: "vera æternitatis notio in vocabulo nostro iis in locis inest, qui immortalem summi Numinis naturam spectant, quod, vocatur אֵל עוֹלָם Deus æternus, Gen. xxi. 33; Jer. xl. 28. חי הָעוֹלָם in æternum vivens Dan. xii. 7 (cf. חָיָה לְעוֹלָם vivere in æternum, immortalem esse instar deorum [Dei] Gen. iii. 22; Job vii. 16), Cui tribuuntur זְרֹעוֹת עוֹלָם brachia æterna Deut. xxxiii. 27, et de Quo dicitur מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל Ps. xc. 2, ab æternitate ad æternitatem, Tu es Deus. Ps. ciii. 17, cf. Ps. ix. 8, x. 16, xxix. 10, xciii. 2."—*Thesaurus* sub voc. עלם.

stantive which varies with the various meanings of this Hebrew word ;[1] but there is also an adjective derived from that substantive, which at least, as used in the New Testament, does not so vary,[2] but

[1] *αἰών*. Although, as Bretschneider remarks, "partim Græcorum more usurpatur." Like עולם its original meaning was that of unlimited duration, and the narrower senses were imposed upon it subsequently. "Aristoteles alicubi scripsit *αἰὼν* dici quasi *αἰὲν ὤν*."—Vorstius, *Hebraism. N. T.* ii. 39.

[2] That in the LXX. *αἰώνιος* like *αἰών*, when applied to future time, varies in its meaning with the senses of עולם is clear from the passages given in Trommius, *s. v.* But, when the Gospel had "brought life and immortality to light" more distinctly, the use of the word *αἰώνιος* was limited (within the precincts of the New Testament) to the idea (taken at the lowest) of indefinite continuance. It is used seventy-one times in the N. T. It is an attribute of *ζωὴ* forty-four times. St. John never uses it in any other connection ; and it occurs twenty-three times in his writings. In two cases only is it possible to argue fairly that the word *may* have a limited meaning. (1) Philemon 15, *αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς*, where however Bretschneider (Lex. Man. *in voc.*) construes the word "illum in sempiternum, scilicet, quia Christianus factus jam vitæ æternæ particeps erat." So (to omit others) Huther *in loc.* "Die christliche brüderliche Verbindung in die Ewigkeit reiche." (2) St. Jude 7, *πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην*, where Pol. Synops. *in loc.* observes that the natural construction of the whole passage is that "Eas urbes incensas instar exhibere ignis æterni, qui impios expectat." The remarks of Huther apply to our E. V. : "*πυρὸς αἰωνίου* construiren De Wette, Arnaud mit den folgenden *δίκην ὑπέχουσαι*, weil dieses sonst zu entblösst stände : allein das Feuer, womit sie bestraft sind, konnte von Judas nicht wohl *das ewige Feuer* genannt werden; dies ist stehende Bezeichnung

means what we English mean by "everlasting." And it is this last-named word which is used in the passages principally under discussion. If it should be precariously contended that this word implies positive endlessness of continuance, as little as it admits of any defined limitation of continuance, it may at least be observed, that as used in Scripture of the penal misery of the lost, the expression "eternal" is fixed in the sense of endless duration by two considerations. Where that word is applied to our home in Heaven, the hopes and longings of men gladly do justice to the natural force of human language. But it is noteworthy,[1] that no stronger

des Höllenfeuers, dem die im letzen Gerichte Verurtheilten überliefert werden ; darum ist es besser πυρ. αἰων. mit δεῖγμα zu verbinden ; jene Städte sind δίκην ὑπέχουσαι ein Exempel des Ewigen Feuers."—*Brief des Judas*, p. 217.

[1] "αἰώνιον in N. T. dicitur omne quod est finis expers, maxime id, quod est post hujus vitæ mundique decursum eventurum. Huc pertinent omnia illa N. T. loca, in quibus formulæ : πῦρ αἰώνιον, κρίσις αἰώνιος, κρίμα αἰώνιον, κόλασις αἰώνιος, ζωὴ (δόξα, σωτηρία) αἰώνιος reperiuntur, v. c. Matt. xviii. 8 ; xix. 16 ; xxv. 41, 46 ; Marc. iii. 29 ; Rom. ii. 7 ; 2 Tim. ii. 10 ; Heb. v. 9. Quemadmodum enim formulis πῦρ αἰώνιοι et sqq. pœnæ perpetuæ peccatorum, quas impii post hanc vitam luent, *sorsque eorum misera futura non interrupta* indicantur, ita opposita formula : ζωὴ αἰώνιος perennis felicitatis piorum post mortem status et conditio significatur, quæ 2 Cor. iv. 17 αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης, Luc. xvi. 9 σκηναὶ αἰώνιοι, Heb. ix. 15 αἰώνιος κληρονομία, et 2 Pet. i. 11 αἰώνιος βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ appellatur."—Schleusner, *Lexicon*, p. 67. So too Bretschneider (Lex. Man. *in v.*), who after

expressions are applied anywhere to the Eternal Life of the Blessed in Heaven, within the New Testament, than are also used to describe the endlessness of the pains of Hell:[1] and therefore the notion that of the two states Heaven only is endless, finds no support from the language of Scripture, but rests solely upon a human speculation external to it. On the other hand, "eternal" is not the only attribute applied in the New Testament to the state of punishment: the word is illustrated and defined by other terms which necessarily fix

quoting all the passages in which the word *αἰώνιος* is applied to blessedness or woe, observes: "Αἰώνιος in formulis *ζωὴ αἰών. πῦρ αἰών. δόξα αἰών. κόλασις, ὄλεθρος, κρίμα, κρίσις αἰών. sempiternum nunquam finiendum* indicare dubio caret, quum præmia æque ac pœnæ post resurrectionem sempiternæ quoque haberentur a Judæis. Vid. test. Aser. in Fab. Cod. Pseud. V. T. i. p. 693, potissimum Psalter. Salom. Ps. 3. vers. 13, 15, 16, ubi *ἡ ἀπώλεια τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*; piorum *ζωὴ αἰώνιος* autem, *οὐκ ἐκλείψει ἔτι*. p. 31."

[1] Commenting on the use of *αἰώνιος* in St. Matt. xxv. 41, 46, with reference to endless life and endless death, St. Augustine observes: "Si utrumque æternum, profecto aut utrumque cum fine diuturnum, aut utrumque sine fine perpetuum debet intelligi. Par pari enim relata sunt, hinc supplicium æternum, inde vita æterna. Dicere autem in hoc uno eodemque sensu, vita æterna sine fine erit, supplicium æternum finem habebit, multum absurdum est. Unde, quia vita æterna sanctorum sine fine erit, supplicium quoque æternum quibus erit, finem procul dubio non habebit."—*De Civ. Dei*, xxi. 23. Even Hagenbach, who quotes this passage, observes: "It is superfluous to quote other Fathers, inasmuch as they all more or less agree."—*Hist. Doct.* vol. i. p. 387.

its true meaning. The Baptist speaks of the penal fire as "unquenchable."[1] Our Lord Himself adopts the word; He thrice said of the "worm" of a sinful conscience that "it dieth not," and that "the fire" of its punishment "is not quenched."[2] The prophet, whose language is quoted, had used a *future* tense,[3] the Divine Speaker, before whose Eyes the unseen world is spread out—on this side in all its unspeakable Beauty, on that in all its unutterable Woe—uses a *present,* as describing the fact yet more vividly. If endless punishment could be described in human words, no words could exhaust the description more absolutely than the recorded words of Christ. They admit of no limitation; they are patient of no toning down or softening away; in the page of the Evangelist, they live for all time before the eyes of men, in all their vivid, awful power. If Jesus Christ has told us anything certain about the other world, we cannot doubt that the Penal fire must last for ever. But may the soul be withdrawn from the punishment? or may it be annihilated? Few Christians have dared to say "Yes" to the first of these questions; to the second, fewer still. For there are Words of Christ which seem expressly designed to prevent

[1] πῦρ ἄσβεστον, St. Matt. iii. 12.

[2] εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον· ὅπου ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτᾷ, καὶ τὸ πῦρ οὐ σβέννυται, St. Mark ix. 43, 44, 46, 48.

[3] וְאֵשָׁם לֹא תִכְבֶּה, Isa. lxvi. 24.

any misconception. He speaks of a "punishment" no less than of a "fire," which is "everlasting."[1] And we are told, that as "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," so "he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."[2] "Abideth on him";—

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 41, 46. After noticing the classical distinction between κόλασις and τιμωρία (Ar. *Rhet.* i. 15, Plat. *Prot.* 323, e) Archbishop Trench observes (*Synon. N. T.* i. p. 28): "It would be a very serious error, however, to attempt to transfer this distinction in its entireness to the words as employed in the New Testament. The κόλασις αἰώνιος of Matt. xxv. 46, as it plainly itself declares, is no corrective and therefore temporary discipline; it can be no other than the ἀθάνατος τιμωρία (Josephus, *B. J.* ii. 8. 11), the ἀϊδίοι τιμωρίαι (Plato, *Ax.* 372, a), with which the Lord elsewhere threatens finally impenitent men (Mark ix. 43–48); for in proof that κόλασις had acquired in Hellenistic Greek this severer sense, and was used simply as punishment or torment, with no necessary underthought of the bettering through it of him who endured it, we have only to refer to such passages as the following: Josephus, *Ant.* xv. 2. 2; Philo, *De Agricul.* 9; Mart. Polycar. 2; 2 Macc. iv. 38; Wisd. of Sol. xix. 4. This much, indeed, of Aristotle's distinction still remains, and may be recognised in the sacred usage of the words, that in κόλασις the relation of the punishment to the punished, in τιμωρία to the punisher, is predominant."

[2] St. John iii. 36, ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει ἐπ' αὐτόν. Compare the Psalmist's עַד־כֶּצַח לֹא יִרְאֶה אוֹר (xlix. 20) with the earlier part of this text. The true force of these words can only be set aside by the *à priori* and unwarrantable assumption that the endless life of the soul was a truth unknown to the Hebrew Psalmists. Compare König, *Theologie der Psalmen*, p. 329 *sqq.*

then if he die in unbelief, he still *exists*, though in his woe—then he is *not delivered* from it. "Abideth on him": the piercing words seem to ring on from day to day, from year to year, from century to century, from cycle to cycle of measureless periods; we feel at this moment that eighteen centuries have not blunted their edge, or lessened their solemnity and power. If so (you reply), it were better never to have lived, than to live and be lost. Unquestionably. Our Lord states this truth with equal clearness. He said of one lost soul, of one who had been blessed with the high privilege of His Companionship, but who fell so deeply as to betray Him to His enemies for money, "Good it were for that man if he had never been born."[1] There are undoubtedly critics who treat these words as they might treat an exclamation in some heathen dramatist; as if the sentence had been uttered in a free rhetorical spirit, and with no thought of the meaning—the vast illimitable meaning—which they really contain and convey. But you can only thus empty the Words of Christ of their native power, if you will consent to forget that they are the Words of One Whose horizon was not bounded by the things of time. The Lord of Life and Death, fixing His Eye in deepest woe, yet with unfaltering precision, upon a creature whom He willed to save,

[1] St. Mark xiv. 21. Compare St. Mark iv. 29, and viii. 36, 37.

yet who spurned His Salvation—thus rules in the fulness of His knowledge, in the tenderness of His Love, that non-existence had been better than an undying being, which in the abuse of its free-will His creature had made an unending misery. It cannot be maintained that the Words of Jesus are true, if at any conceivable point of a distant future any restoration to heaven is possible for Judas. For beyond that point, however distant, there would still stretch the vision of a still illimitable Eternity; in which the restored soul would find in the presence of God, a "fulness of joy" which would redress the balance, and would speedily reduce a purgatory that had lasted even for ages to a scarcely perceptible speck in a past existence. Unless the human soul be not necessarily immortal, Judas lives: unless the Words of Christ be untrustworthy on the question of Life and Death, Judas lives in woe. There is no escape: the unspeakable awfulness of our Saviour's language is precisely *this*, that it does leave no room for any reversal of the doom of the betrayer—of the man whose epitaph was thus traced by the finger of Infinite Knowledge and of Infinite Love,—"Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

A few gifted minds such as Origen[1] have made

[1] The passages which best illustrate his deliberate opinion are in formal treatises (*De Prin.* i. 6, *Contr. Celsum*, v. 14, 15). In his popular teaching, he sometimes expresses

shipwreck, from whatever causes, of this Article of the Christian Faith. But amidst the rare aberrations of genius, the belief of the Christian people has been such as might have been expected from the tenor of the Words of Christ. And it is particularly observable how in the early ages of the Faith, the martyrs standing before their heathen judges felt one after another that their choice lay between a transient pang of suffering and an endless woe.[1] Not that the error which is connected

opinions which seem to foreshadow the latter doctrine of a purgatory before the Judgment (Hom. vi. in Exod. No. 4, Hom. iii. in Ps. xxxvi. No. 1, quoted by Lumper, 9, 595), or which at least say nothing inconsistent with it. He admitted, however, that his doctrine of a final ἀποκατάστασις (of men and devils) might be dangerous to the unconverted. "For most," he says, "it is enough to know that sinners will be punished. It would be inexpedient to say more: since there are persons whom the fear of Eternal Punishment scarcely restrains from giving themselves up to wickedness with all the evils that follow on it!"—*Contr. Cels.*, vi. 26. He speaks of belief in eternal punishment as morally useful, although not true (Hom. in Jer. 19, tom. ii. pp. 507, 508, ed. Migne), when commenting on Jer. xx. 7, thus admitting the adaptation of the Revealed Truth to the wants of the human soul. This conviction seems to have coloured his popular teaching. (Hom. 7, in Exod. *Opp.* ed. Migne, vol. ii. p. 347, where he quotes Isa. lxvi. 24.)

[1] Ruinart, *Acta Sincera.* Passio Stæ Felicitatis (p. 23), circa 150. Passio S. Maximi, circa 250 (p. 133). Maximus is described as a plebeian who was engaged in trade. When desired by the Proconsul to sacrifice, that he might escape the torture, he replied, "Hæc non sunt tormenta quæ pro

with the name of Origen has been repudiated by no process less rude and irregular than the action of popular sentiment. Apparently during his lifetime, and certainly after his decease, the speculations of the great Alexandrian were condemned by councils of the Church ; [1] and if equivocal language

nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi inferuntur, sed sunt unctiones. Si enim recessero a Domini mei præceptis, quibus sum de Evangelio Ejus eruditus, vera et perpetua mihi manebunt tormenta." Other examples might be cited from Ruinart : they show what was the simple, unhesitating faith of the Early Church.

[1] Origen was silenced and deposed by two successive synods held during his lifetime. His leading tenets were condemned at Constantinople in 540. "The erroneous doctrines," says Archdeacon Churton, "which Origen had taught, or which others taught in his name, were condemned as heretical ; and among them the doctrine of the future restitution of fallen spirits and of evil men. See this very fully proved by a Church historian, who has given it the fullest examination. *Natal. Alex. Hist. Eccl.* Sæc. iii. Diss. xvi. And this is admitted by the best informed inquirers of our own Church, as by those of foreign Churches. See Bishop Pearson, *Minor Works*, i. 413, and the able Life of Origen in the venerable Archdeacon of Westmoreland's *Biographies of the Early Church*, ii. 114, 133."—(*Guardian*, March 9, 1864.) To the objection that Origen was not condemned by any of the first four General Councils it has been well replied, "that each Council did the special work of its own emergency, and not other kinds of work ; and that Origenism was not a pressing question in 325, 381, 431, or 451."—(W. B. in *Guardian*, March 16, 1864.) It is at least certain that the sixth General Council declares the fifth to have assembled for the purpose of condemning Origen

on the subject of endless punishment is to be discovered in a stray writer here and there by the student of Patristic Literature, he will almost invariably observe that its force is destroyed by language of an opposite drift, which the same writer has elsewhere employed. Nor is it pretended that there is any serious ground for doubt as to the Catholic Belief of the Church, as evidenced by the consent of her Representative Fathers.[1] But, let us note it well, they who to-day deny the truth in question, or who rashly express "hopes" that the Faith of Christendom may not be true, oppose themselves not merely to the decrees of Councils and to the consent of Fathers, nor yet merely to the "popular" belief of centuries, nor to the reign of a world-wide Tradition. Nor do they merely controvert a Hebrew Prophet or a Christian Apostle, and take up the position of those inconsequent Rationalists who, respecting nothing else in Holy Scripture, still profess to respect as Divine and Infallible the recorded Words of Christ. For it is face to face with Him that they stand in

and other persons, thereby indorsing the anathema of the Synod in Constantinople in 540.—(Routh, *Script. Eccl. Opusc.* ii. 232.)

[1] See Petavius *de Angelis*, lib. iii. c. 8. It will be observed that Petavius quotes language from Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzen, which may fairly outweigh those passages of doubtful import in their writings, to which appeal has recently been made.

controversy:[1] it is His sentence, in Whose disclosures concerning the world beyond the tomb we Christians place our hopes for life and for death, that they arraign at the bar of what is at best a section of contemporary opinion. Our Lord and Saviour, with what would be generosity in a mere man, but with what in Him doubtless was provision against the known weakness of His creatures, has not bequeathed to His Servants or Representatives the responsibility—nay the odium—of proclaiming those stern and awful certainties; He has Himself heralded, at one and the same time, the penalties and the benedictions of His Gospel; He has Himself unveiled the Eternal pit, in phrases and words as urgent and positive as those whereby He has opened heaven to all believers; and fifty genera-

[1] Observe the force of the following admission from a writer, of whose relations to the true faith of the Church of Christ no unfair estimate will be formed from the fact of his being one of the five authorities referred to with approbation by M. Renan, in his recent *Vie de Jesus* (Int. p. vii.). M. Reuss has been citing St. Matt. xxv. 30, 41 *sqq.* and some similar passages: "Toutes ces peintures," he says, "sont claires et simples; elles n'offrent rien d'équivoque; il n'y a pas un mot qui trahisse une arrière-pensée, qui nous fasse entrevoir une signification cachée, qui les réduise à une valeur purement figurée et parabolique. Il est évident que les narrateurs qui nous servent ici de guides, ont pris tout cela au pied de la lettre et qu'il ne leur est pas resté une ombre de doute à cet égard."—Reuss, *Theol. Chrêtienne*, tome i. p. 249, Deux^{me} edit.

tions of Christians have believed and confessed that His Authority is final, and that to tamper with His Revelations is only more obviously foolish than it is perilously blasphemous.

Brethren! I seem to interpret to myself the thought of your hearts: men are won, you say, by the mercies rather than by the terrors of the Lord. Would it not be more accurate to say, with St. Augustine, that the terrors of the Lord drive us men to take refuge in His unspeakable mercies? Is it not a fact, familiar to every clergyman, is it not a matter of personal experience to some at least in this vast congregation, that the undefined, haunting fear of an endless woe does again and again guide unquiet souls to seek peace and safety in kneeling at the foot of the Cross, and in tasting of that Plenteous Redemption, which flows from the Wounds of Jesus? Are there not now resting in Paradise souls, who owe their predestined crowns and thrones to that first sharp pang which pierced their spirits, when, many years since, on earth, in the midst of a course of sin, they first realised the certain existence of an endless Hell? You urge that there are higher motives than terror for religious effort. Undoubtedly. It is better to love God for His own sake than to love Him for the sake of the blessings which He gives, or the woes from which He saves. But He Who made the human heart knew more perfectly what motives

are really needed to act upon it than the theorists who proclaim what they would propose as the revision of His work. He knew that more men are moved by fear than by love: and that man may be educated to love fearlessly, if he begins by cultivating that fear which is the beginning of moral and spiritual wisdom. Certainly we cannot exaggerate the mercies of our redeeming Lord: they are simply infinite. But side by side with them lie also His judgments, unexplored and infinite; so that the "great deep" is their symbol in the world of nature; and His judgments are equally with His mercies an integral part of the Truth of His Revelation, nay, of His Being: they are equally a part of His "whole Counsel" as it has been made known to us men; and it is our business, as clergy, to proclaim them. To do so, many of us solemnly pledge ourselves this day before God and man. We owe it, my brethren of the laity, to our God; we owe it to Jesus Teaching and to Jesus Crucified; we owe it to the terms of our commission, and to the claims of our consciences; but we owe it above all to your undying souls to tell you the plain, unmutilated truth. We dare not, like the serpent in Paradise, whisper to you here, within the precincts of the Church of God, that you may cherish a "hope" that God's threats may after all be false. To tell you that in the future world the only alternative to Heaven is a Purgatory, might indeed

earn for us, at the present crisis of thought in England, a momentary popularity. But if it were morally in our power to sacrifice one truth of the Creed, we could not thereby insure the rest. We could not stop at "expressing a hope" that the punishment of the wicked may not be final. On the one side, an Eternal Heaven might easily become both to the philologists and to the metaphysicians as problematical a thing as an Eternal Hell. On the other, that infinite Price which our Lord paid upon the Cross that He might save us from a boundless woe would soon be rejected as needless; and we should reduce His propitiatory Sacrifice to the level of a moral triumph. From that it were but a short step to the denial of His Godhead. For, as a perfect act of faith in a single truth has already, before perceiving it, grasped other truths by implication, so a deliberate rejection of a single truth entails the rejection, first in principle, and afterwards avowedly, of other truths beyond. Here is our danger. Fear you we may not: but you may shame our weakness by bidding us tell you the truth, or you may tempt us in speaking to you, to "prophesy smooth things," or at best to substitute the "hay, wood, and stubble" of the things of time for the unchangeable realities of the other world. If we dare not be honest with you; if through want of spirituality, from a selfish instinct that we should condemn ourselves in your

eyes, we should shrink from a high and soul-controlling doctrine—woe, woe to us! One day we know, that, side by side with you, but with greater, far greater responsibilities than yours, which we have freely chosen to bear, we too, your ministers, must stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. How shall we then make answer to the stern and terrible rebuke of our Master, how shall we endure to hear your deserved reproaches, your wail of remorse and agony, if now, through cowardly fear of man, or any false refinement, or weakly acquiescence in the polished unbelief of the hour, we hide from you one-half of our Master's message; justifying by our silence the taunt of His enemies, that in this age we fear to preach what He Himself announced as certain; or banding ourselves with them, in saying that He was at least in part mistaken, and that the men of to-day have improved His Gospel by eliminating its severities?

And you, my dear brethren, who now are pressing forward to receive your various powers from the consecrated hands through which to-day, as ever before and to the end of time, Christ our Lord reigning in His Church bestows them—bethink you, I pray, at this the most solemn crisis of your lives, of that great Day which cannot be distant, and which may be very near. Bethink you now, as you receive your talent of the account which you must then render for its due improvement. Pray

that you may be fearless, as speaking for the Mighty God; but pray too that you may be loving, and humble, as becomes sinners, who remember their own sins, while in God's name they dare to counsel their brethren. If we of the Clergy feel in our very hearts that we may be lost, as easily, nay rather, by reason of our greater opportunities, much more easily than other men; we shall speak of Hell, not as a threat which we flourish without measuring its awfulness, but as a fact, present to the eye of our spirits; we shall think and speak of it as of a common danger—just as of Heaven as of a common Hope, and of a common Home. Let us by God's grace resolve to be true; let us pray God to make us true—true in our inmost selves—and true to that counsel of God, which it is our duty to proclaim to man. God indeed is severe and stern with the self-reliant; but for the self-distrustful and the prayerful He is a tender and most indulgent Master, Whose service is not less the highest joy than it is the highest freedom. Even on earth for every earnest, simple, truthful, unselfish spirit among the servants of the Church, there is a foretaste of the imperishable Reward above. It may be enjoyed, and that abundantly, in the cottages of the poor, in the pulpits of the Sanctuary, on the steps of the Altar. Stephen may still ennoble the lower grade of service by a sacrifice of self which opens heaven, and which Jesus owns as the first

of martyrdoms. And there are mercies, blessings, crowns that fade not away [1]—for those who though afar off, yet by word and act faithfully witness to the justice and to the grace of their God, and who, standing beneath the Cross of the Redeemer of the world, wield, according to the measures of their ministry, the consolations of the keys of Petèr, the powers of the sword of Paul.

[1] 1 St. Peter v. 4.

SERMON IX

THE MEANING OF CHURCH LIFE ON EARTH:

PREPARATION FOR AN ETERNAL FUTURE[1]

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."—1 Cor. xv. 19.

On a day like the present, when your Parish Church has been repaired and restored to the Public Service of God, it is natural to ask yourselves, what is the most fundamental idea which this building represents? Why is it here? Why in a city where every inch of ground is so valuable is this large area covered with a building, devoted to no one of the usual interests of life? Why, in an age when, at least among so many classes of the population, time is of such exceeding value for business, for study, for purposes of improvement, or purposes of benevolence, should men and women

[1] Preached at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, which was re-opened for service after restoration, on the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, June 23, 1872.

meet at regular intervals in a structure of a particular shape and character, and listen to addresses always upon one class of subjects, and join in language—addressed to a Being Who is characterised in a great variety of ways, but Who is throughout invisible? To a complete stranger to our habits, our civilisation, as we term it, this question would appear to require an answer; and we are likely to be none the worse for asking it of ourselves, and so making an occasion like the present useful for coming face to face with one or more of our deepest convictions.

And if we are to attempt this, we can hardly do better this afternoon than place ourselves under the guidance of that great Apostle to whom this Church is dedicated, and whose ministry, in what to him would be a foreign land, and after a lapse of eighteen centuries, it is meant to continue. If St. Paul were among us now, there are, we may believe, few sites, even in London, in which he would have found himself more at home than here —close to a great industrial centre, where men and women converge from all parts of this vast metropolis, and where, as in the ancient cities of the Levant, trade with its attractions may prove a useful handmaid, now as of old, to the efforts of faith. What the place where prayer was wont to be made was at Philippi, what the school of Tyrannus was at Ephesus, what for a short while

Mars Hill was, or promised to become, at Athens, and the house of Jason at Corinth,—that is this church now, in interest of the same faith, associated for ever with the work of the same Apostle. It is devoted to the propagation, to the teaching, and to the worship of the Christian Church. And here the question arises,—What in the Apostle's view was the main purpose, the fundamental idea of the religion which he preached with such perseverance and fervour, and for which, in the end, he laid down his life?

1. Can we answer this question by saying that the main purpose of Christianity is to make men better: that Christian belief, Christian observances, Christian studies, Christian interests of all kinds, are meant to make Christians more like Jesus Christ: that Christianity is nothing if it is not the elevation of character, the purification of motive, the quickening of energy, the increased vitality of conscience, the subjection of the passions to the will, and of the will to its legitimate Ruler, God? Certainly we may say that this is an immediate and main purpose of Christianity. Our Lord's teaching was chiefly concerned with questions of conduct. The Sermon on the Mount is an elaborate contrast between a true and a false code of conduct: the Beatitudes imply that the project of making men better is in the very forefront of our Lord's teaching; and when we turn to the Apostolic

Epistles everything is in harmony with this. In the most doctrinal of St. Paul's Epistles, such as those to the Romans and the Galatians, there is at the close a series of exhortations, of the most practical, importunate, and detailed description, addressed to persons in very various circumstances of life; putting before them their real duties and their most pressing dangers—and, in short, treating conduct as a most serious and absorbing subject, to which a Christian, as such, is bound to give his first and best attention.

"Be ye therefore perfect," says our Lord, "even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect."[1] And His Apostle says that Christ came to bless men "in turning every one of them from his iniquities,"[2] and "to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;"[3] and, accordingly, Christians are desired to "avoid even the appearance of evil,"[4] and are reminded that "without holiness no man will see the Lord."[5] And, indeed, there is no great necessity for insisting at length upon this. The New Testament is incontestably decisive in what it prescribes about the Christian life, and in the picture it gives us of the life of the earliest Christians. "All they that believed were of one heart and one soul, and they had all things common." "They continued

[1] St. Matt. v. 48. [2] Acts iii. 26. [3] Tit. ii. 14.
[4] 1 Thess. v. 22. [5] Heb. xii. 14.

stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."[1] It is bracing and humbling to read such pictures of the Christian life as those which are given us by Tertullian, who represents the state of things at the end of the second century of our era. In writing a public Apology for Christianity, he could venture to appeal to facts which at least show that in the early ages of the Church the practical side of Christianity was not undervalued.

"We Christians do good," he observes, "without respect of persons. We look for our recompense, not at the hands of men, of whose gratitude and approval we make small account, but at the hands of God, Who has prescribed this universal love to us as a duty. We are forbidden equally all acts and words that may hurt a fellow-creature; nay, the desire, the very thought of evil. Whom could we hate, if it is enjoined upon us to love our enemies? If we are forbidden to avenge ourselves on those who injure us, that we may not render ourselves as guilty as they, whom can we injure? You yourselves may decide. How often do you heathen rage against the Christians, from your own impulse, or in obedience to (prosecuting) laws! How often, without waiting for orders, and without any justification but its irrational passion, does a hostile mob greet us with stones and set

[1] Acts ii. 44, 42.

fire to our dwellings! In these times of furious excitement, the very dead are not spared; torn from the graves in which they rest—that sacred asylum of death—unrecognisable, mutilated, their corpses are outraged, rent limb from limb; the relics are dispersed. But have we ever been known to use reprisals against this implacable hatred which thus pursues us even beyond the gate of death? A single night and a few torches in our hands might afford us the opportunity for an ample vengeance; but may God forbid that a religion which comes from Him should endeavour to avenge itself by human means, or should be depressed at being purified through suffering."

Who can but feel the intensity of passion in conflict with the sternest and most chastened sense of duty which breathes through this language? Tertullian proceeds to characterise the Christian life under other aspects towards the pagan civilisation of the time. In quiet times his words would be, perhaps, Pharisaical; but there are crises when men must risk misunderstanding and criticism, on the score of apparent egotism, in the interests of truth and justice. He proceeds as follows:—

"Indifferent as we are to glory and to distinctions, your public assemblies have no attractions for us. We avoid your games on account of their superstitious origin. We have nothing in common with the wastefulness of the circus, with

the immodesty of the theatre, with the barbarous scenes of the arena, with the frivolity of the gymnasiums. Of ourselves we form a single body, united by the bonds of one faith, of one discipline, of one hope. We meet together, in some sense, to importune God with our prayers. God likes to suffer this violence; and we pray for the emperors, for their ministers, for all who are in authority, for the present state of the world, for peace, for delay of the Day of Judgment. We meet to read the Holy Scriptures, in which, as circumstances suggest, we find the very guidance and warning that we want. This Divine Word nourishes our faith, raises our hope, strengthens our confidence, tightens the bonds of discipline, by its inculcation of precept. . . . Men advanced in years preside. They attain to this distinction, not by buying it, but by the recognition which is awarded to tried excellence. Money has no weight in the things of God. If we have among us a kind of treasure, it comes from a pure source; we have not to blush for having sold religion. Each makes his contribution every month, or when he likes, and if he likes, and if he can afford it. No one is forced to give; all is voluntary. It forms a kind of fund of piety; it is not spent in feasts or debaucheries. It is used for the purposes of comforting and burying the poor, of feeding destitute orphans, and servants who are unable to work from extreme old

age, and shipwrecked sailors; and if there are any Christians condemned to work in the mines, shut up in prison, or banished to distant islands, only for their loyalty to the cause of God, Religion enlarges her motherly care in favour of those who have confessed her." [1]

It might perhaps be thought that what Christians said about themselves in early times was one thing, but the heathen opinion about them quite another. And undoubtedly there were all kinds of foolish scandals about the Christians current in heathen society, sometimes wilfully invented by their enemies, and often believed and circulated in good faith by ignorant but prejudiced persons. Thus it was said that the Christians met in private for bad purposes; that they ate the flesh of little children; that they were disaffected to the government; that they were in some way or other at the bottom of all public calamities. Still, at times, a glimpse of the real effect of Christianity upon the conduct and lives of Christians appears to have been caught sight of by persons who had opportunities of forming an opinion. To take a single instance. We have an authentic account of the trial of Afra, who in the year 304 was burnt alive at Augsburg during the persecution of Diocletian. Afra, before her conversion, had led a bad life; and Gaius, the Roman judge who tried and condemned

[1] Tertullian, "Apology," c. xxxvi.–xxxix.

her, had been made aware of this. "Sacrifice to the gods," said he; "it is better for you to live than to die in torture." "Before I knew God," said Afra, "I was a great sinner; but I will not add any new crimes to those which it is my misery to have committed heretofore, as I should do in doing what you require." Said Gaius, "Go to the temple, and sacrifice." Afra replied, "Jesus Christ is my God; I have Him ever before my eyes. Continually do I confess my sins to Him; and because I am all unworthy to offer Him any sacrifice, . . . I desire to offer myself for the glory of His Name, that this body, which has been so often defiled by sin, may be purified through suffering." "I know," replied Gaius, "that you are a woman of bad character. You had better sacrifice, then, for you cannot possibly pretend to the friendship of Him Who is the God of the Christians." Afra replied, "Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that He came down from heaven to save sinners. The Gospel records that He allowed one who lived such a life as mine has been, to wash His feet with her tears, and that He forgave her her sins. So far was He from rejecting sinners, that He conversed familiarly with them, and ate with them." "Sacrifice," cried Gaius, "that you may yet be enriched by a life of pleasure." "I have for ever," said Afra, "taken leave of such wealth as that. I have despoiled myself of all that I gained in such

a way. But the very poorest of our brethren would not touch such ill-gotten money, although, when I offered it, I told them that I gave it them that they might pray for me to God." Gaius replied, "Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with you. It is useless for you to treat Him as your God; such an one as you can never be called a Christian." "It is too true," said Afra, "that I do not deserve to bear the Christian name; but Jesus Christ has had pity upon me, and has admitted me into the number of those who believe on Him." Then came the end.[1]

In such a conversation as this we see the real power of the religion of Christ, and the kind of idea about it which the best-informed heathen had. Gaius knew enough to know that the God of the Christians was All-holy. He did not know enough to understand that He is also All-merciful. But at least he understood that the general effect of Christianity was to promote virtues which were almost unknown among the heathens, and that for a Christian to fall short of this was to be untrue to the distinctive marks of his religion.

It is impossible, therefore, to say accurately that early Christianity was so occupied with doctrinal questions as to be insensible to the great work of teaching men to lead better lives. In point of fact, they learnt to lead better lives because they

[1] See "Acta Sanctorum;" August, vol. ii. pp. 39–59.

were so deeply and genuinely interested in Christian doctrines; because they believed in those doctrines, not as passing speculations about the unintelligible, but as facts resting on God's authority, as doctrines eternally, absolutely true.

Now, of the doctrines which most powerfully influenced Christians, as such, to lead good lives there were three leading ones. The first, the love of Jesus Christ Who died for sinners "that," as St. Paul says, "they should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again."[1] This doctrine appeals to the sense of obligation and of gratitude; to the feeling which would prevent all but very hard and bad men from vexing and paining One Who had done them a great and inappreciable kindness.

The second doctrine which influenced early Christians to lead good lives was the belief that by the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism they were really made members of Christ and children of God, and that this union with Him was confirmed by the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. The early Christians reasoned, with St. Paul, that they were not simply their own; that they belonged to Another, as being, in a mysterious but most real way, one with Him; that the faculties of their minds and the members of their bodies were His; and that they could only think, or say, or do what

[1] 2 Cor. v. 15.

was wrong, not merely at His expense, but with instruments which were His, not theirs. "Shall I then take the members of Christ," says St. Paul, "and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."[1]

But the third doctrine, which influenced them most powerfully, was their belief in a future life. The heathens had a dim shadowy notion of a world of spirits which was the home of the dead. The Penates, or little images which were part of the furniture of an old Roman household, probably represented deceased ancestors of the family, with whom their descendants thus wished to maintain a kind of indefinable connection. The mass of the Roman people no doubt believed in a world of spirits; but towards the latter years of the Republic, the old faith, such as it was, had died away. Mæcenas, the friend and minister of Augustus, the patron of art and letters, the leader of cultivated Roman society in his day—the site of whose beautiful villa is well known to any visitor to Tivoli—Mæcenas "shuddered at the prospect of death, and welcomed any suffering if he were only left with the boon of existence." It was not that death meant annihilation, certainly; Mæcenas was too thoughtful to suppose that. The question was what it did mean; the distress was occasioned by the uncertainty which surrounded it. What if

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 15.

something, some ghost or extract of former life, did survive; some thin, cold shade, stripped of all the vigour and warmth of an embodied existence, living only on the memories of an irrevocable past, or haunting the scenes which were associated with its impotent regrets? Mæcenas, like other eminent and respectable heathens, ancient and modern, was a living illustration of that mournful but energetic expression of the Apostle's, in which he speaks of those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."[1]

No doubt it was in order to escape from a future life as sketched by the imagination—the life of a cold ghost on a lonely shore—that the Epicurean and other thinkers made a desperate effort to treat the presentiment of a future which is part of the original furniture of the human mind as a sickly and discreditable superstition; to persuade themselves that because nothing certainly was known about what happened after death, therefore nothing did happen; to treat the human spirit as if it were nothing more than a phosphoric scintillation from matter which perished with new modifications of the matter which produced it. But no abstract physical arguments can permanently silence the voice of the consciousness of the human spirit. There is that in man—in every man—apart from Revelation, which whispers to him in his better

[1] Heb. ii. 15.

moments that all does not end at death. And thus it may be said with some truth that man feels his immortality; that on this, as on other points, at a certain stage of religious declension, the aberrations of reason are corrected by those irrepressible instincts of soul which are beyond reason, and which we vaguely describe as feeling. This is, perhaps, what is meant by the poet of the day—

> "If e'er, when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> "A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And, like a man in wrath, the heart
> Stood up and answer'd, 'I have felt.'" [1]

And yet feeling varies; it is powerful at one while, weak and fleeting at another. And it cannot be transferred from mind to mind like an argument addressed to the reason; it depends upon individual character; the feeling which is natural and obvious to one man is unintelligible, or perhaps even repulsive, to another.

Thus it was for Christianity to place man's immortality on a firm basis. Certainly the Jews had believed in a future; the later Jews, and the Pharisees very particularly, believed in a resurrection of the body. But a fact was required

[1] Tennyson, "In Memoriam," cxxiv.

which should arrest speculation; a fact sufficiently well-attested to be insisted on against all opponents, in the face of the world. This was supplied by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Upon the truth of that fact everything in Christianity depended. "If Christ be not risen," exclaimed St. Paul, "our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."[1] St. Paul does not say that "if the dogma of the Resurrection should have to be given up, the moral teaching of Christianity will still remain, which is after all the matter of real importance." Why? Because with the Resurrection the certainty of immortality would go too; it might be treated as a high probability, but it would not be counted on like the rising of the sun to-morrow morning. And with this would go one of the very first conditions for acting well. If anything is certain, it is that all human action is most powerfully influenced by the agent's ideas about himself. A man in private life carries about with him a totally different consciousness of what is befitting in him from that of a king or a prime minister; what is adequate and noble in the one case is mean and disappointing in the other. So if we think of ourselves habitually as beings who have certainly before us an endless existence in a future state, we shall act, it is probable, very differently indeed from those who seriously suppose

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 14.

that in dying they take leave of conscious existence altogether; or from those who think that at the best there is only a very good chance of our not doing so. There are, of course, Christians who are inconsistent with their creed, just as kings often enough forget what is part of a kingly bearing; but, given a conviction of the reality of a future life as secured by the Resurrection, and a man will strive—according to his lights, and with such aids as he can secure—to prepare for it.

And thus Christianity makes men better—not by insisting upon the abstract excellence of goodness, but by insisting that we really belong to a much larger stage or scene of action than that which meets the eye of sense; that there is a future life before us; that at the entrance of that life, we must all "appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to give an account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad;"[1] and that our conditions hereafter will correspond to the award then given. This belief in a future, for which we are made ready by the grace and righteousness of Christ our Lord and God, Who died and rose for us, Whose Manhood is the earnest of His perfect sympathy, as His Godhead is the warrant of His Redemptive power, is the fundamental thing in Christianity; it colours it throughout. Everything in this world is dwarfed to a

[1] 2 Cor. v. 10.

Christian's apprehension by the view of the next which has opened upon him. As he goes about the streets; as he mixes in society; as he watches the keen contests between men and parties which make up public life; as he reads the daily prints which reflect so vividly, so implacably, the absorbing interests and passions of the passing hour;—he says to himself, with the Apostle, "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." [1]

And thus a Christian is led to make a great venture. He gives up the seen for the unseen; this world that he may win the next. He does much that he would not do, he leaves undone much that he would do; because he looks beyond sense and time; because he has a larger horizon than those who do not, and acts accordingly. And if—to put a possible supposition—he is mistaken after all, if there be no after world, he has made a fatal miscalculation. "If, in fact, in this life only we have grounds for hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We have staked our all upon Him as having the keys of hell and of death; we have seriously supposed that when He had overcome the sharpness of death, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. If after all He is only a figure in human history—if He is but one of the fleeting shadows of time, we

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 18.

have made a greater mistake than any adherents of an untrustworthy philosophy which exacts little or nothing in the way of work, sacrifice, practical tests of sincerity, from those who adhere to it. Christianity is the great and serious Religion of the Life to come, of which Islam is a travesty, and Buddhism a sickly shadow; or,—it is without any claims whatever on the heart and intelligence of the world.

And here we seem to reach an answer to the question with which I started, viz. What is the rationale, the use, the justification of the buildings which, in the name of Christ, are placed at intervals, alas! far too wide, amid the population of this great city, and throughout the country? I reply that they are buildings in which human beings are to prepare for another life. Their purposes may be differently described and yet correctly, and men may prepare for that which follows upon death elsewhere. Still this is their great purpose. As they rise, with more or less of beauty, with more or less of obtrusiveness, from among surrounding buildings, they speak a language which we cannot mistake; they say with the Apostle, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Around them all tells of what we see, of what we are, of what we touch; they speak of what we do not see, of what we shall be, of that which is beyond the reach of

sense. They are temples of the invisible; they are temples of the future life. Within these blessed walls the knowledge that is gathered bears, directly or indirectly—all of it—upon another world. Within these walls character is moulded to that type which alone will be happy, could be happy, in another world. Here, too, are learnt habits and occupations which will be the only permissible ones hereafter—without sympathy with which heaven would be hell. The Bible, read constantly here, is, St. Augustine used to say, a volume of "letters from the heavenly country."[1] The Sacraments administered here provide strength for journeying towards it; prayer and praise offered here are anticipated communications with Him Whom we shall there see, as we humbly hope, face to Face. As we cross the threshold of a church, we should say, "I am now about to engage in duties which have no meaning, if I am only an intelligent, well-dressed, educated animal, if I am not an immortal spirit, who has a vast future before him after death. It is as an undying soul that I am reasonable in thus retiring from ordinary occupations which connect me with this visible world; it is because I dare to look forward, because I cannot but look forward, to an eternal existence of rest and enjoyment, in which I shall live with the Object of my

[1] Enarr. in Ps. xc. Serm. 2, "De illâ civitate unde peregrinamur, litteræ nobis venerunt: ipsæ sunt Scripturæ."

unwearied affections—Jesus." Yes! Temples of the future life; that is the true theory of the churches of Christendom, that is the true explanation of the care and beauty which is lavished on them, of the frequent attendance at them, of the reverence and devotion which befits us within them. We seek Jesus Christ here at times, that we may hereafter be with Him uninterruptedly. One day we shall look on these buildings, as an oasis in a great desert, where, in the barren drought, shade and pasture were ready to hand; where life was, or might have been, estimated in its true proportions; where what is transient and unsubstantial was for a short while forgotten, that communion might be held with the unchanging and the real; where all that took place—penitence, intercession, praise, communion, instruction—was one supreme effort, in the words of to-day's beautiful Collect, "so to pass through things temporal, as finally to lose not the things eternal." God grant that that retrospect may be a happy and thankful one, and that while the brief day of life still lasts, we may make the most of our opportunities of preparing for the future, and, as to-day's occasion reminds us, of extending them, as largely as possible, to others.

SERMON X

THE TRUE REWARD

"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."—ST. MATT. vi. 2.

OUR Lord repeats these words three times in His Sermon on the Mount, and we may therefore conclude that He means us to pay particular attention to them.

He is contrasting the outward obedience which was paid by the Pharisees to the rules of their own Jewish law with that inward and sincere service which He expected from His own disciples. In doing this He passes in review three duties: almsgiving, prayer, fasting. Tobit's advice to his son was a maxim of Jewish piety: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness."[1] The language of Cornelius to St. Peter shows what was the practice of a pious convert from heathenism to the religion of Israel in the days of the Apostles: "Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until

[1] Tob. xii. 8.

this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God."[1] Alms, prayer, fasting: these were three main duties in the life of a pious Jew, and in this order of importance. Alms, prayer, fasting: these were to be, to the end of time, duties for all pious Christians, but not quite in this order of importance, nor yet dictated to the Christian conscience by the same class of motives as to that of the Jew.

Our Lord's discussion of these duties—almsgiving, prayer, fasting—follows a regular plan. First He describes the corrupt Jewish practice in the case of each duty, then He observes what was secured by it. Then He lays down what He expects from His own servants; and lastly assures them of the reward which will follow obedience.

1. He begins with almsgiving.

"When," He says, "thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men." He adds: "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

This was the way of many Pharisees, or, as our Lord calls them, the actors or hypocrites. In

[1] Acts x. 30, 31.

contrast with it, our Lord lays down the rule for Christians :

" But thou when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth ; that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father, Which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly."

2. Next, as to prayer.

" The hypocrites," He says, " love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." He adds again : " Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

This was the way of the ostentatious Pharisees. Christian prayer was to be offered on a different principle :

" But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet ; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father Which is in secret ; and thy Father, Which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

3. Lastly, He notices fasting.

" When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast." He adds a third time : " Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

Such was the Jewish fasting of the day. Our Lord's disciples were to fast also, but from a very different motive :

"But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father Which is in secret: and thy Father, Which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

In these three strophes (for our Lord was really speaking in poetry) there is a double contrast: a contrast between the performances, and a contrast of the rewards. The work which is meant for the eye and approbation of men is placed side by side with the work which is offered simply to God—as the true Lord and Master of human wills, Whose approval is of the first, or rather of solitary importance. The alms given to attract attention to the giver are contrasted with the alms given in secret. The prayers offered in the synagogues and at the corners of the streets are contrasted with the prayers said in the secrecy of the closet. The fasting proclaimed to all the world by the disfigured countenance is contrasted with the fasting disguised from the world's eye by the anointed head and washed face and cheerful countenance. And after the contrast of the performances follows the contrast of the rewards. Each class of workman has his reward, and it is in keeping with the aim of his effort. Those who give alms, and pray, and fast, in order to win human approval, do succeed in securing what they want. "They have their reward." And those who give alms, and pray, and

fast, in order to carry out the will of God, so far as they know it, these also succeed in securing what they want: "The Father, Which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward them openly."

"They have their reward!" As these words fall once, and a second, and a third time from the Divine lips of Christ, we seem to hear in them a threefold lesson. They proclaim a truth. They suggest a contrast. They pronounce a sentence.

I

"They have their reward!" Here we have, first of all, a profound truth about human nature. Man, as man, works for an object, or, as our Lord says, for a reward. The lower creatures work without any object or end in view; they have no horizon beyond the mechanical action in which they are engaged. They eat, walk, toil, without any accompanying reflection; they meet as best they can the necessity, or they address themselves to the enjoyment of the moment; but they do not connect it with what has preceded and what will follow it; still less do they give it a place in a protracted effort which is to result in some thing beyond itself. With man—gentle or simple, barbarous or civilised, Christian or Pagan—it is otherwise. Man's reason impresses on him the necessity of seeking in or beyond his action an end of some

kind to be secured by it. If man makes an expenditure of time and strength, this is with a view to some result which reason demands even if imagination describes it. Be the action itself trivial or important, the exercise of muscle or the exercise of mind—be its scene the humblest of peasant homes or the proudest of imperial palaces —it is, as human action, directed towards an object. That object may be near or remote, it may be within reach or unattainable, it may be precious or utterly worthless, it may be earthly and degrading or supersensuous and Divine. But, be this as it may, the law of rational human action holds good. It is never objectless, since to be objectless is to cease to be human. And our Lord, Who had created human nature before by His incarnation He made it His own that He might restore it, pointed to this rule of human action when He said of one class of His creatures, "They have their reward."

But an objection may be raised which we may pause for a moment to consider. Do you mean to say, it will be asked, that there is no such thing as disinterested action? Does man never do what is generous or right without any aim beyond? Are the preachers of the Divine Self-sacrifice to echo that shallow maxim of wordly cynicism, which tells us that "every man has his price"?

Here, my brethren, there is a confusion of thought, between pursuing a noble and disinterested

object and pursuing no object at all. At bottom the objector would seem to think that the only objects worth the name are selfish or earthly objects. Yet the smile of God upon the recesses of conscience is not less an object than the public approval of our fellow-men; the moral joy of doing what is right is just as much an end of action as the material gain of doing what is wrong. "Every man has his price!" Doubtless the cynic who shaped that saying meant what is a libel on our human nature. He meant to say that in every man, even in those who seem to be noblest in action and in purpose, most consistent and persevering in their elevation above the average selfishness of their fellow-men, there is a hidden passion, a secret weakness, an undetected flaw,—if you could only get at it,—which, once reached, would place them on a level with the rest of the race. They owe, so he thinks, their apparent elevation to the accident of not having been as yet approached on the vulnerable side. He agrees with what Satan said of Job: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land: but put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face."[1]

[1] Job i. 9–11.

No, brethren, this is not wisdom; it is mere vulgar suspiciousness. In all generations there are some men of whom it is not true that they have their price, if by price be meant something that will appeal to the lower instincts, whether they be mental or bodily, of our fallen nature. But in another and higher sense, we may readily admit the proverb is true enough. Those who have risen above human care and crime, the truest saints and servants of Christ, these too, in one sense, have their price. It cannot indeed be rendered to them by any earthly paymaster, but it is a price nevertheless; it is the object for which they have lived, worked, and suffered,—the eternal approval of the Perfect Moral Being, Whose they are, and Whom they serve. They are no real exception to the rule that every man has an object, be it what it may,—that all human life and work is directed towards what our Lord calls a reward.

And in their way the Pharisees too of Christ's day obeyed this law; they had a definite object before them—the good opinion of their contemporaries,—and they secured it by their efforts. "They have their reward."

II

"They have their reward!" Here is suggested, tacitly but forcibly, a tragic contrast. Their

reward! There is then another reward than theirs: another, and a higher. Let us turn our eyes towards it—this true reward of men,—this prize of prizes, for which any other must be a paltry substitute.

"The Lord hath made all things for Himself." [1] That is the secret, the key of creation. If God was to create at all, let us say it with reverence, He could not do otherwise. The Self-existent and All-perfect Being could not surround Himself with creatures who were to find the final satisfaction of their various powers and instincts in something else than Himself. He is the End of all beings, He is the Centre of all existences, by an inevitable necessity,—because He is God. The irrational creation subserves His purpose by an irresistible law. The sun, the animals, the plants, cannot but praise the Lord, as they obey the laws which govern them; they are fated, by a happy necessity, to promote His glory. With man it is otherwise. Man has the majestic, it may be the fatal, prerogative of deciding whether he will serve his Creator or not. The sovereign gift of free-will, which is man's highest distinction among the creatures, involves this power of deciding whether to live for God, or for some one or some thing else. But however man may decide, the law of his happiness, as of his perfection, remains the same. Only one Being

[1] Prov. xvi. 4.

can say to the soul of man, as He said to the patriarch nearly four thousand years ago, "I will be thy exceeding great Reward."[1] There is that in man which nothing short of God can satisfy. There are inexplicable longings, depths of restlessness, unexplored chasms of possible despair, out of which the soul of man cries for an Infinite and Perfect Being as its true End and Object in existence. "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice."[2] And He does satisfy, or, as our Lord says, reward the soul that gives itself to Him. All the mysterious yearnings of the heart, all the bright utopian visions of boyhood, all the earnest dreamings of the higher and purer hours of later life, find their counterpart and their explanation in Him, the Infinite and the Eternal. "I will be thy exceeding great Reward." So it was in the beginning of human history; so it is now and ever shall be. Those only are kept in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on Him. The passion for truth, the passion for beauty, the demand for law, the sense of awe, of wonder, of reverence, of exhilaration,—all are satisfied in the Eternal God. They are satisfied, in no stinted way, here and now in this sphere of sense and time; but they are only satisfied perfectly in the endless Beatific Vision of the saints in heaven.

This, my brethren, was the reward of which our

[1] Gen. xv. 1. [2] Ps. cxxx. 1.

Lord spoke. "Thy Father, Which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly." Heaven means at bottom not an infinitely magnificent pleasure-garden, but lasting contact between a created nature and its God. Pleasure was said by a great heathen thinker to consist in the contact between a faculty and its object; and man's true and perfect happiness consists in like manner in contact—contact the closest, the most uninterrupted—with the Being Who has shaped every faculty of man's existence that it might find its satisfaction only in Himself.

Men sometimes speak of certain abstract objects as the reward of their efforts in life. They live for virtue; they live for truth; they live for philosophy; they live for philanthropy. Brethren, if these things are real to them, they live for God. He is the Eternal Loving-kindness from which all human love of man must flow: He is the Eternal Wisdom, the Eternal Truth, the one unerring Philosophy of which all that can present itself to a created intelligence is a spark or a shadow—He is Himself the Absolute Virtue, Virtue in its personal and self-existing form, so that to live really for virtue is to live for Him. In Him all these nobler aspirations of men meet and are satisfied; they are all included in that comprehensive promise—"I will be thy exceeding great Reward."

III

"They have their reward!" In these words we hear, thirdly, a judicial sentence, which the Divine Speaker passes on some of the men of His time. "They have their reward." The original means, "they have it altogether, so entirely that there is nothing to be looked for in the future." The meaning is that they have contracted for a certain stipend, and they have received it; they have received it, and they cannot still expect what they have already received; they have made the best of their bargain, such as it is, and there is an end of it. This is at once the language of irony and the language of compassion. Certainly it is irony. The Pharisees gave alms, they prayed, they fasted, for a certain consideration. They believed themselves to be men of practical sense, without any foolish enthusiasms or fancies. They wished to get the good opinion of their contemporaries; and they succeeded. It was not a high object indeed; but it was the height of their ambition. As they passed along the streets, men saluted them as the best men of the day, as serious, moderate, respectable, as the true representatives of all that was great and noble in ancient Israel. As they gave alms in the public places, and prayed visibly in the midst of crowds, and bore in their emaciated frames the proofs of long and painful fasting, men remarked

that the spirit of Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Daniel and the Maccabees still lived among these worthy and devoted descendants of Abraham. It was this very recognition which they had all along in view; and our Lord, as if registering a fact of everyday experience, observed that they had obtained it. Nobody could say that their efforts had been wasted: they had worked for popularity and credit, and it was ready to their hand.

"They have their reward!" If this is irony, it is much more: there is in it an undertone of deep pathos. It was pathetic that the foremost men in Israel should be thus giving their money for that which was not bread, and toiling for that which could not satisfy.[1] Were these men the children of psalmists and prophets, of saints and patriarchs, each and all of whom, in every variety of strain, had insisted upon the supreme claims of God so jealously and peremptorily as to exclude all human rivals? Was this the outcome of the religion of Sinai; of the Mosaic revelation of the unique Majesty of God; of the favours lavished on the chosen race, during a thousand years of triumph and disaster? Had these men been trained in the most spiritual school known to the ancient world, only to seek for a recompense which the higher minds among the heathen would have treated—nay, did treat—with deliberate neglect?

[1] Isa. lv. 2.

It was pathetic: for two reasons. This reward for which the Pharisees worked so hard was transient. It was the creature of a day; the men who enjoyed it most might easily outlive it. Popular consideration cannot be ensured; it may be courted successfully; but it is an inconstant visitant; it disappears as rapidly and capriciously as it came. Nothing is more pathetic in English history than the closing years of Queen Elizabeth, conscious that she had outlived the acclamations of her people, and sinking gradually into her grave with the sense of having aimed at an object which was already dissolving before her eyes.

And, secondly, this reward, considered as a certificate of merit, was worthless, even when it seemed to be most enjoyable. What was the real dignity of the tribunal which awarded it? What was the true value of the sanction which it pronounced? How could a mixed multitude, for whose judgment in any other matter the Pharisees themselves would have felt and professed scant respect, really give moral satisfaction by its approval of their actions? The matter would not bear reflection, but then, vanity does not reflect. It lives upon the surface of life; it makes the most of the trifles which feed its successive caprices; they are trifles,—they are worthless,—but it has its reward.

IV

Let us endeavour to carry away one or two practical lessons.

1. Our Lord's words suggest the true idea of a Christian's life. A Christian life is a venture; it is a stake upon the eternal future. This is one of the deepest differences between it and the lives of men who are not governed by Christian principles. The ordinary man of the world says, "Everything after death is at best uncertain, and therefore I shall make what I can, in the way of enjoyment, out of the hours of this life, as they pass." He has his reward. The Christian says, "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."[1] His reward is to be the product of an investment in the future. He dreads nothing so much as the risk of drawing it before the time. He sees the true deep meaning of those solemn words of Jesus Christ: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you";[2] and again, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My name's sake."[3] It does not follow that because a man is absurd in this life he will be glorified in the next. But, at

[1] 2 Tim. i. 12. [2] St. Luke vi. 26.
[3] St. Matt. v. 11.

any rate, there is a safety in being unpopular, unrecognised, thought little of, denounced, which those who have staked all upon the world after death gratefully recognise. And there is a danger about success, about the kind words of friends, about the smile and homage of society, about the patronage of the powerful and the great, about public recognition of good and generous deeds, which should haunt a soul that is really living for hereafter. Each man must ask himself the question, Is my reward being had now? Is anything left to be given by and by at the hands of Christ?

2. On the other hand, it does not necessarily follow that all good works done publicly forfeit Christ's approval hereafter. He Who said of the Jews, "They have their reward," said also to His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works."[1] Some Christians owe publicity in what they do to others: they have to act, not merely in view of God's glory, but so as to give a good example. This is true of all who are in a position of responsibility or influence; rulers, clergymen, parents, landowners, heads of families—these are all bound to works of mercy, to prayer, to self-denial, and to letting others see that they own the obligation. All will be well, if they can be fairly sure of their own intention—to give glory to God instead of to get

[1] St. Matt. v. 16.

glory from men. There is no harm in doing a kindness publicly, or in worshipping in a crowd, if the publicity is put up with instead of being sought, and if the real intent be to do service to the Father Which seeth in secret. Publicity is not fatal to our loyalty to the precept, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." God's glory may require that a man should "confess Christ before men" in whatever way; and the intention to glorify God will transfigure the act—just as a beautiful soul lights up a rude or ugly countenance.

3. What our Lord's words come to is this, that a good intention to serve God is the soul of a good act, whatever be its outward form. A work good in its outward form may be utterly vitiated by its inspiring motive. It may resemble a man with a beautiful face, yet possessed by a devil. It may be fair and glorious in the eyes of men, yet disowned, as having on it the trade-mark of the enemy,—disowned before God and His angels. The poison of an impure motive, the love of human praise, will make the kindest deeds, the heaviest sacrifices, the most painful efforts, worse than worthless. Too easy is it now, as eighteen centuries ago, to enjoy our reward here and now, and to have no part in, no expectation for the everlasting future.

On the other hand, a sincere desire to glorify

God, although it cannot make an act, such as theft or murder, which is intrinsically bad, anything else than what it is, can and does make acts, otherwise trivial and insignificant, things of high value in the kingdom of heaven. A bit of paper is sufficiently worthless; but if signed by a man of credit it may be a cheque for ten thousand pounds. Hundreds of the actions of a Christian throughout the day would be utterly insignificant if the intention to glorify God, in union with the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, did not confer on them a lustre which is altogether independent of their intrinsic worth.

4. The most practical resolution to take is to endeavour to think of our work in life as we shall think of it when we are dying. Certain it is that at that solemn hour all that has been done to win the praise of man, all that has not been offered to God, will be accounted worthless. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me."[1] The outward splendours of a life of even apostolic devotion will then count for little, if there have not been a simple desire within to do what has been done for the glory of the Invisible Christ.

[1] St. Matt. vii. 22, 23.

The applause of mobs, or of literary circles, or of clubs, or of drawing-rooms, or of senates, will then be rated at their true value as the verdict of human judgments, controlled by human passions, and as unworthy of the aim of an immortal being. One Being only, in His Sanctity, His Justice, His Majesty, will then be present to the eye of the soul,—if it be in any sense alive to the solemnities of the moment. "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Think of that hour, so inevitable,—it may be, so near,—and resolve to live for a reward which will not then appear utterly worthless. Resolve to "set God always before you," in work as in devotion, in the business and the relaxations of life as well as in the hours of silence and reflection. It may be hard at first to think, speak, and work in the consciousness that the eye of an Unseen Master is upon you, and with the object of offering to Him what you think and say and do. It may be hard; but, depend upon it, it will be worth the effort. Nothing is really gained by that which passes almost before we have had time to grasp it: and nothing is lost by momentary sores and disappointments which are the prelude to a future of endless joy.

THE END

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